2265 Impact of Word Choice on Discomfort Level Following Orthognathic Surgery

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Objectives: The quality of the altered sensation as perceived by patients following orthognathic surgery is not homogeneous. The word descriptors used by patients can provide valuable information about a patient's perception of the sensory, affective, and evaluative dimension of the neurosensory change. The objective of this study was to evaluate the association between the description of and the extent of discomfort or problem related to sensory alteration reported postsurgically.

Methods: 146 bilateral sagittal split osteotomy patients participating in a randomized clinical trial completed a neurosensory assessment before surgery, 6, 13, and 26 weeks after surgery. 27 word descriptors of the sensation at rest (spontaneous) and with stimuli (evoked) used by patients were categorized (Gregg, 1992) as no alteration, hypoesthesia (ex., numb, rubbery), nonpainful hyperesthesia (ex., tingling, twitching), or hyperesthesia (ex., painful, shocking). At each visit, participants also assessed the level of discomfort or difficulty (1=none to 7=serious) caused by numbness, reduced lip sensitivity, unusual feelings on the face, or pain on the face.

Results: 72% of the participants were female and 95% Caucasian. 40% had a two jaw procedure and 60% a mandibular osteotomy only. The extent of discomfort caused by numbness, reduced lip sensitivity, unusual feeling, and pain on the face were significantly associated with the descriptors of sensory alteration at rest and with stimuli (Mantel-Haenszel nonzero correlation statistic for repeated measures stratified by subject; P<0.05). Patients who used nonpainful hyperesthesia or hyperesthesia word descriptors reported higher average discomfort for all measures at all three postsurgery times.

Conclusions: The extent of discomfort or problem related to altered sensation following orthognathic surgery is related to the descriptors used by patients to depict their altered sensation. Supported in part by NIH DE013967.