Objective: A patient's assessment of the cost/benefit of orthognathic surgery should include information on the surgical convalescence. However, few studies have documented the patient's report of day-to-day symptom recovery in the first months following orthognathic surgery. The purpose of this study was to assess the utility of a HRQOL instrument similar to that used with patients following third molar removal (Conrad et al., 1999) as a post-orthognathic surgery health diary.

Methods: The HRQOL instrument was designed to assess patient perception of recovery in 4 main areas on each postoperative (POD) day for 90 days: 1) pain (average, worst, medication use); 2) oral function (opening, chewing, talking); 3) general activity (sleeping, daily activities, social interaction, and sports); and 4) other symptoms (nausea, bleeding, swelling). Pain was recorded on a 7-point Likert scale and the other items on a 5 point Likert scale.

Results: 23 patients (mean age = 23; std = 7.9; 65% female; 50% two jaw surgery; 42% maxillary only) have agreed to participate and have completed at least the first 30 POD diary. At least 50% of the patients reported no or little trouble in less than 6 days for bruising, bleeding, and sleeping; and between 11 and 13 days for swelling, talking, routine and social life activities, and medication use. 50% reported no or little average pain in 19 days; no or little trouble opening in 23 days and eating in 27 days. Resolution took greater than 30 days for worst pain, chewing, and sports participation.

Conclusions: In general, patients reported that symptoms resolved first, followed by general activity involvement and pain, and finally oral function. Such information will allow a day-by-day characterization of recovery after orthognathic surgery and provide a data collection method to compare clinical practices adopted to improve recovery. Supported in part by NIH DE013967 and DE005215.