Should we group left and right sided clefts together when reporting outcomes in clinical practice?

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Scientific outline

Background
Children with cleft have a higher risk of academic underachievement, psychosocial problems, poor audiological, speech, dental and facial growth outcomes and compared to their unaffected peers. Most national studies have selected patients with unilateral cleft lip and palate (UCLP) for their outcome assessments. Although the reasons for a greater incidence of left sided UCLP is unclear (L2:R1), patients with left or right sided oral clefts are often treated as a homogenous group with few studies investigating the impact of laterality on outcomes.

Aim
The aim of this study is to investigate the association between cleft laterality and several outcomes previously assessed using CCUK data. Understanding the impact of laterality may help identify risk factors for poorer outcomes and provide an additional screening tool for children with certain cleft attributes. This will allow further tailoring of management for relevant groups and may further our understanding of the aetiology of laterality of clefts.

Data
Through the CCUK archive, data will be interrogated to determine cleft laterality. An attempt will be made to perform comparisons previously assessed outcomes based on the cleft laterality. This project has the potential to link between cleft phenotypes and specific characteristics that have not been studied before. Understanding this link will enable us to better identify patients with potentially poorer outcomes, understand potentially distinct aetiologies of cleft laterality and consider whether there should be specific screening mechanisms in place to identify groups of patients with poorer outcomes.

Key words
Cleft lip and palate, cleft laterality, cleft outcomes