

# Review of: "Assessment of the differences in the use of free iliac flap for maxillomandibular defects with patient-reported outcomes"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The authors investigated the outcomes of a single series of mandibular reconstruction using the DCIA-based flap. A brief literature comparison is also performed. I really appreciate the results, but there are some problems and limitations with the study.

The manuscript describes a study with undefined design (retrospective? prospective? randomized? review? other?) based on data collected of 25 patients. The authors positively correlate the use of free iliac flap with favorable functional and aesthetic outcomes. However, despite a remarkable questionnaire use, they failed to provide solid conclusions on the relationship about the advantage of this solution respect the fibula free flap.

In detail my remarks:

- In the Results paragraph the authors cite the "Patients Demographics and Perioperative Findings": these data are not a result of the study, they can be classified and correctly presented as "Demography"
- In the Results paragraph are listed the complications related to donor and recipient sites, but also reported in the Table n#4, why reporting again the same data?
- In Table n#6 the authors report the patients and surgeons quoting about the functional and aesthetic outcomes, but how they have been standardized? No legend are provide for understanding.
- In the Discussion paragraph the authors refer to selected articles of literature, but without providing any detail about them to compare the results of the study.
- Discussion should be a paragraph where authors give information about the pros and cons about the flap they used, comparing the literature evidence, in the present study there is not a real discussion. For example: what is the major side effect you find in using the iliac free flap? In the literature is it reported? Did you find that in one of the baddest functional/aesthetic outcome another flap would had been a better solution? Why? And so on...
- Figure n#4: in the image "f" the iliac bone doesn't seem as healthy as shown in image "e", specifically the bone contour appears irregular and somehow decreased in volume, a late effect of vascular anastomosis impairment?
- Conclusions can not be: "We are of the opinion that the free vascularized iliac bone flap should be a reliable flap that should be preferred as the first choice in most maxillomandibular reconstructions." With full respect, your opinion is not enough. You have to provide data that show the advantage or superiority of iliac free flap respect other solutions.

The study has to be globally revised. I strongly suggest the authors to define which type of study they have conducted, clearly present both the pros and cons of the iliac free flap and develop a discussion on the basis of data they collected. I also suggest to introduce a “Study limitations” section and if any conclusion can be drawn, draw it on the basis of data, and not of opinions.

After the revision the paper can be submitted for publication.