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# Who's Performing Primary and Secondary Cleft Palate Surgery? A Scope of Care Analysis Over Time

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## Background

Specialties performing primary cleft lip/palate repair and secondary corrections include plastic surgeons, otolaryngologists, and oral maxillofacial surgeons.[1] There are primary cleft lip and palate repairs as well as secondary corrections which include Pharyngeal flap, Secondary palate lengthening, as well as Sphincter pharyngoplasty.[2,3]

While the scope of care has been changing, it is unclear to what degree and particularly within the pediatric population.

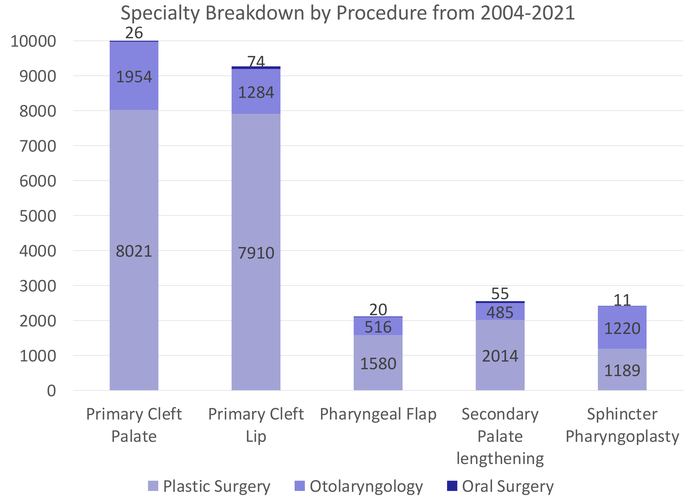
## Objective

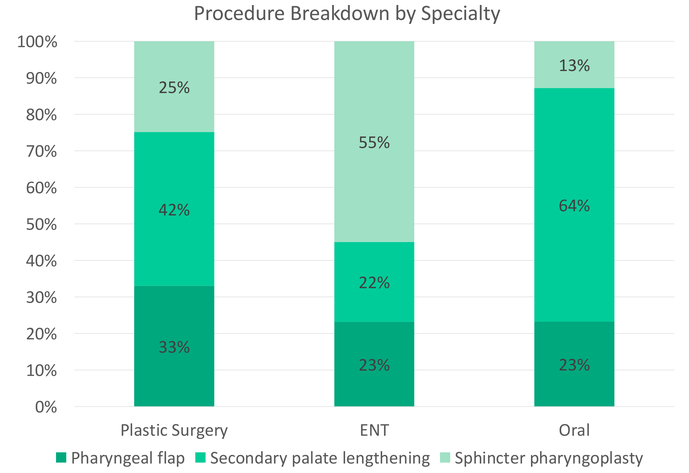
The objective of this study is to investigate patterns in surgical providers of cleft care over time.

## Methods

Data was obtained from 45 hospitals from 2004-2021 through the Pediatric Health Information System database. Specialties performing primary cleft palate repair and secondary procedures for correction of velopharyngeal incompetence (VPI) were obtained according to CPT code and age.

| Procedure | CPT code | Age (y) |
|---|---|---|
| Primary cleft palate | 40700, 40701, 40702 | < 3 |
| Primary cleft lip | 40700, 40701, 40702 | < 3 |
| Pharyngeal flap | 42225 | > 3 |
| Secondary palate lengthening/revision | 42220 and 42200 | > 3 |
| Sphincter pharyngoplasty | 42950 | > 3 |




## Results

26,359 procedures were included in this study, of which 79% were performed by plastic surgeons, 21% by otolaryngologists, and 0.71% by oral surgeons. The predominant specialist for primary repair of cleft palate was plastic surgeons. Secondary correction of VPI had variable involvement by specialty. The most common secondary procedure performed by plastic surgeons (42%) and oral surgeons (64%) was palate revision/lengthening ($P<.05$). The most common secondary procedure performed by otolaryngologists was sphincter pharyngoplasty at 55% ($P<.001$). The proportion of primary cleft palate and lip procedures performed by each specialty was consistent from 2004-2021. From 2017-2021 there was a significant decrease in the proportion of palate revision/lengthening and sphincter pharyngoplasty performed by plastic surgeons ($P<0.05$).

## Conclusions

Plastic surgeons performed most of the cleft lip and palate procedures consistently from 2004-2021. However, the proportion of secondary procedures done by plastic surgeons has significantly decreased in recent years. From 2017-2021 there was a significant decrease in the proportion of palate revision/lengthening and sphincter pharyngoplasty performed by plastic surgeons ($P<0.05$).

## References

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