

Effectiveness of septoplasty compared to medical management in adults with obstruction associated with a deviated nasal septum: the NAIROS RCT

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Plain language summary

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Plain language summary

Septoplasty is an operation to straighten the septum, which is the partition wall between the nostrils inside the nose. Septoplasty can be used as a treatment for people who have a bent septum and symptoms of a blocked nose, such as difficulty sleeping and exercising. Medical management (a saltwater spray to clear the nose followed by a nose steroid spray) is an alternative treatment to septoplasty. The Nasal AIRway Obstruction Study (NAIROS) aimed to find out whether septoplasty or medical management is a better treatment for people with a bent septum and symptoms of a blocked nose. We recruited 378 patients with at least moderately severe nose symptoms from 17 hospitals in England, Scotland and Wales to take part in the NAIROS. Participants were randomly put into one of two groups: septoplasty or medical management.

Participants' nose symptoms were measured both when they joined the study and after 6 months, using a questionnaire called the Sino-nasal Outcome Test-22 items. This questionnaire was chosen because patients reported that it included symptoms that were important to them. Other studies have shown that a 9-point change in the Sino-nasal Outcome Test-22 items score is significant. After 6 months, on average, people in the septoplasty group improved by 25 points, whereas people in the medical management group improved by 5 points. We saw improvement after septoplasty among patients with moderate symptoms, and among those with severe symptoms. Most patients who we spoke to after a septoplasty were happy with their treatment, but some would have liked more information about what to expect after their nose surgery. In the short term, septoplasty is more costly than medical management. However, over the longer term, taking into account all the costs and benefits of treatment, suggests that septoplasty would be considered good value for money for the NHS.

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