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# THÈSE

pour le

## DIPLÔME D'ÉTAT DE DOCTEUR EN MÉDECINE

Qualification en Chirurgie Maxillo-faciale et stomatologie

### **BONE GRAFT IN BILATERAL MANDIBULAR SAGITTAL SPLIT OSTEOTOMY: THE CURRENT STATE OF PRACTICE IN FRANCE**

Etat des lieux sur les pratiques en France de la greffe dans  
le foyer d'ostéotomie lors des chirurgies d'avancée  
mandibulaire

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Née le 10/12/1997 à Les Sables d'Olonne (85), FRANCE

Sous la direction de M. le Professeur KUN DARBOIS Jean-Daniel

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*Admise dans l'intimité des personnes, je tairai les secrets qui me seront confiés. Reçue à l'intérieur des maisons, je respecterai les secrets des foyers et ma conduite ne servira pas à corrompre les mœurs. Je ferai tout pour soulager les souffrances. Je ne prolongerai pas abusivement les agonies. Je ne provoquerai jamais la mort délibérément.*

*Je préserverai l'indépendance nécessaire à l'accomplissement de ma mission. Je n'entreprendrai rien qui dépasse mes compétences. Je les entretiendrai et les perfectionnerai pour assurer au mieux les services qui me seront demandés.*

*J'apporterai mon aide à mes confrères ainsi qu'à leurs familles dans l'adversité. Que les hommes et mes confrères m'accordent leur estime si je suis fidèle à mes promesses ; que je sois déshonorée et méprisée si j'y manque ».*

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**Bone graft in bilateral mandibular sagittal split osteotomy: the current state of  
practice in France**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Introduction:** Bilateral sagittal split osteotomy of the mandible (BSSO) is the most common orthognathic surgery procedure. The use of bone grafting seems widely used whereas its interest has not been shown to date. The aim of this study was to describe the current state of practice of bone graft in BSSO in France.

**Materials and methods:** An online survey was used to collect data about the use of bone grafting in BSSO procedures among French maxillofacial surgeons.

**Results:** One hundred and forty-eight surgeons responded to the survey, mostly maxillo-facial surgeons (96%). Only 31.8% of participants had already performed grafts in BSSO and the majority did it in less than 10% of cases. The main grafting indication was the degree of advancement especially for advances over 10mm. Different types of grafts were used, mainly: autologous bone grafting (mandibular or hip) or other bone grafting (xenograft, allograft).

**Conclusion:** This survey shows the diversity of practices in France regarding the use of grafting in BSSO. Further studies are needed to investigate prospectively the utility of such procedures.

## INTRODUCTION

Bilateral sagittal split osteotomy of the mandible (BSSO) is one of the most commonly used orthognathic surgical techniques to correct mandibular deformities, particularly mandibular retrognathism (i.e. Angle class II). The procedure aims to achieve a functional and esthetic outcome by restoring normal dental occlusion (i.e. Angle class I) and improving facial harmony. However, despite its overall reliability, several intraoperative and postoperative complications may arise, such as unfavorable bone healing and defects at the mandibular inferior border. These complications are influenced by various patient and surgery-related factors, including patient's background, the degree of mandibular advancement (>10mm), and surgical technique[1-3].

Bone grafting at the osteotomy site has been proposed as a strategy to enhance healing and reduce complications, particularly in large advancements. Autologous grafts (mandibular, maxillar, cranial, hip or teeth harvesting), xenografts, allografts, and biomaterials such as titanium or ceramic have been used in clinical practice[4]. While evidence supports the utility of bone grafts in maxillary osteotomies (e.g., Le Fort I) to promote bone union and stability[5-7], data on their effectiveness in BSSO remain scarce. Only a few studies have addressed their role in preventing defects at the mandibular border or pseudarthrosis, and no consensus exists regarding the best indications or materials to use[8-12].

The aim of this study was to assess and describe the current practices regarding bone grafting in BSSO among French orthognathic surgeons through a nationwide online survey, in order to better understand prevailing trends and inform future clinical recommendations.

# MATERIALS AND METHODS

## **1. Design of the study and target population**

A prospective multicentric observational study was designed. All the facial surgeons, of private or public exercise, who usually perform orthognathic surgery in France, were targeted to participate to the study. It includes maxillofacial surgeons (MFS) but also a few other specialty surgeons (otorhinolaryngologists or plastic surgeons and stomatologists). Their email addresses were collected using databases of all the main national French associations of MFS (i.e. Association française des jeunes chirurgiens maxillo-faciaux (AFJCMF), Société française de stomatologie, Chirurgie maxillo-faciale et Chirurgie orale (SFSCMFCO) et Association française des chirurgiens de la face (AFCF)). All the surgeons working in the departments of maxillofacial surgery in French public hospitals have also been invited to participate to the study.

Invitations to participate to the survey were sent by e-mails addressed to every surgeon and head of department: one invitation e-mail followed by at least 4 reminder e-mails. The data collection period lasted four months, from December 2023 to March 2024.

## **2. Survey design**

The online survey was designed using the Sphinx platform (Sphinx Declic 4.30, Chavanod, France) and emailed to the participants.

The survey is reported in Table I. It include 17 questions related to:

- Surgeon's characteristics (identity, specialty, experience in orthognathic surgery, type of exercise (private or public))
- Surgeon's habits in bone grafting (indications, type of graft, etc...)
- Personal comments

**Table I.** Online survey.

<b>Questions about the surgeon</b>	
Name	...
First name	...
Speciality	Maxillo-facial surgery Other : ...
Place of practice (among French departments)	...
Type of exercise	Public Private Mixed
Status in the case of public or mixed practice	Praticien Hospitalier (PH) (i.e. Hospital practitioner) Praticien Hospitalier Contractuel (PHC) (i.e. contractual Hospital practitioner) Praticien Hospitalier Universitaire (PHU) (i.e. University and Hospital practitioner) Maître de conférences des universités et Praticien hospitalier (MCUPH) (i.e. Assistant Professor and Hospital Practitioner) Professeur des Universités et Praticien hospitalier (PUPH) (i.e. University Professor and Hospital Practitioner) Chef de clinique, Assistant Hospitalier (i.e. Medical Fellow) Other : ...
Years of experience in orthognathic surgery <i>Without initial formation (residency)</i>	<5 years Between 5 and 15 years >15 years
<b>Questions about the surgeon's practices</b>	
Average number of mandibular osteotomies per year	<20 Between 20 and 50 Between 50 and 100 >100
Type of mandibular ostotomy	Epker Obwegeser-Dalpont Hunsuck Supra-basilaire Other : ...
Grafts	Yes No
<b>Questions if you answer yes to "grafts"</b>	
Proportion of mandibular osteotomies with grafts	<10% Between 10 and 50% >50%
Type of graft	Autologous bone grafting, mandibular harvesting Autologous bone grafting, cranial harvesting Autologous bone grafting, hip harvesting Other bone grafting (xenograft, allograft) Biomaterial (titanium, ceramic, ...) Other : ...
Grafts indications	Systematic indication Degree of advancement Presence of an intraoperative notch Stability of the surgical set-up Type of osteosynthesis Type of osteotomy Patient background Other: ...
In case of degree of advancement in the previous question, degree of advancement from which a bone graft performed	>6mm >8mm >10mm >12mm Other: ...
<b>Open questions</b>	
Details about grafts indications	...
Trigger(s) that led to grafting or element(s) that made people stop grafting	...
Free text commentary	...

### **3. Ethical approval**

The approval of an ethic committee was not necessary given the type of study carried out (cross-sectional descriptive study). The study was conducted in accordance with the institutional guidelines of the French Ethical Committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments.

### **4. Data analysis**

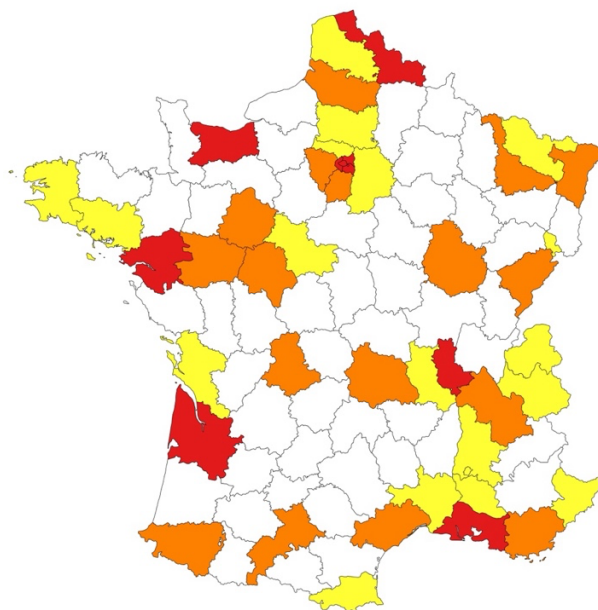
All statistical analyses were performed using R software (version 4.0.5). Descriptive statistics were expressed as numbers (%) for all qualitative variables. To compare the characteristics of surgeons from the private/mixed sector versus those from the public sector, Exact Fisher tests were performed. For participants performing grafts in BSSO, the number of indications for grafting were presented via the median with 1st and 3rd quartiles. A comparison of the number of indications ticked between public and private/mixed surgeons was performed using a Mann-Whitney test. Finally, the minimum degree of advancement according to which surgeons graft was compared between the two previously mentioned groups via a Cochran-Armitage test. Differences were considered statistically significant when a p-value < 0.05.

# RESULTS

## 1. Participant's characteristics and surgical practices

Of the 256 surgeons contacted for this study, 148 (57.8%) returned the completed questionnaire.

About twenty of these 256 surgeons did not perform the survey since they did not perform orthognathic surgery or had retired. The geographic distribution of the participants is shown in Figure 1. Table II shows the characteristics of the study participants. Almost all participants were maxillofacial surgeons (96.6%). The medical specialty was not specified for only one respondent. The most performed type of osteotomy was the Epker osteotomy (75.0%) followed by Obwegeser-Dalpont osteotomy (15.5%). It is interesting to note that all types of exercise were represented. A few differences could be observed between private/mixed surgeons versus public surgeons. Surgeons from the mixed and private sectors were more experienced (p-value = 0.002) and were more numerous to perform graft in BSSO (p-value = 0.005) than those from the public sector. Only 47 (i.e. 31.8%) of the 148 participants had already performed grafts in BSSO.



**Figure 1.** Geographical breakdown of participants (yellow <1%; orange 1-5%; red >5%).

**Table II.** Descriptive of participant's characteristics and surgical practice (n= 148).

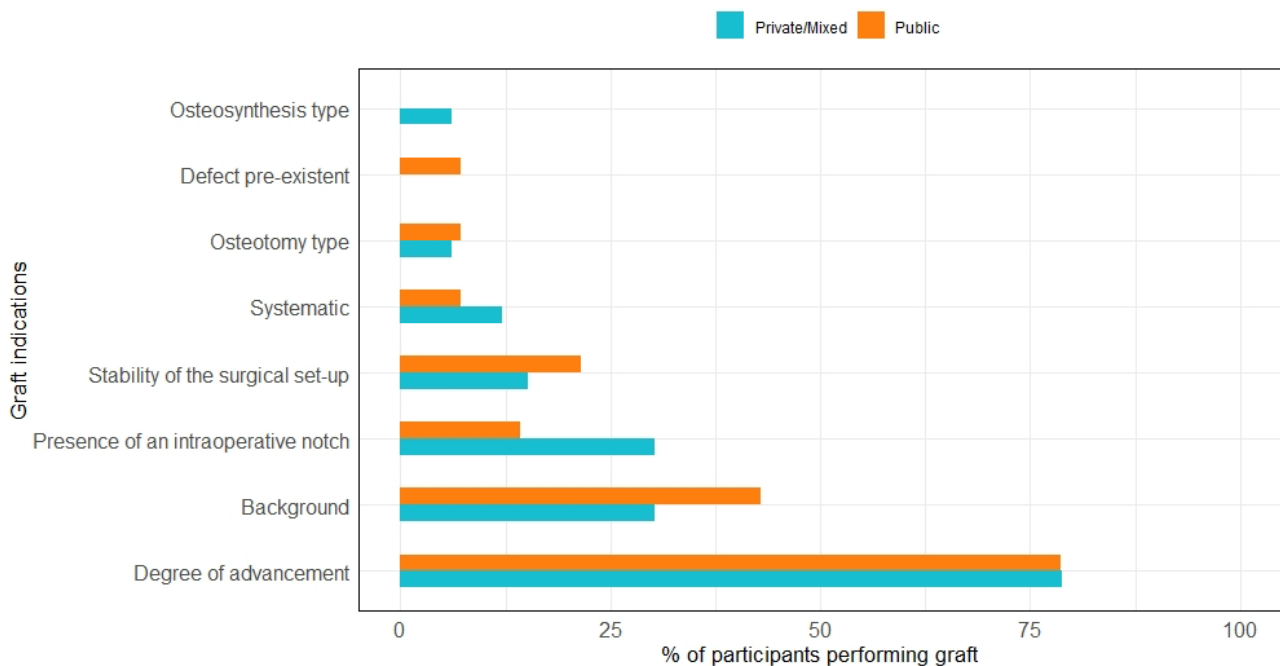
	<b>All surgeons n = 148</b>	<b>Private &amp; mixed practice n = 78</b>	<b>Public practice n = 70</b>
<b>Exercise type</b>			
<b>Mixed</b>	30 (20.3%)	30 (38.5%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Private</b>	48 (32.4%)	48 (61.5%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Public</b>	70 (47.3%)	0 (0.00%)	70 (100%)
<b>Speciality</b>			
<b>Maxillofacial surgeons</b>	143 (96.6%)	74 (94.9%)	69 (98.6%)
<b>Stomatologist</b>	2 (1.35%)	2 (2.56%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Otorhinolaryngologist</b>	1 (0.68%)	1 (1.28%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Plastic surgeon</b>	1 (0.68%)	1 (1.28%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Others</b>	1 (0.68%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (1.43%)
<b>Experience, years</b>			
<b>&lt;5</b>	44 (29.7%)	15 (19.2%)	29 (41.4%)
<b>5-15</b>	64 (43.2%)	34 (43.6%)	30 (42.9%)
<b>&gt;15</b>	40 (27.0%)	29 (37.2%)	11 (15.7%)
<b>Number of BSSO, per year</b>			
<b>&lt;20</b>	53 (35.8%)	24 (30.8%)	29 (41.4%)
<b>20-50</b>	49 (33.1%)	20 (25.6%)	29 (41.4%)
<b>50-100</b>	17 (11.5%)	10 (12.8%)	7 (10.0%)
<b>&gt;100</b>	29 (19.6%)	24 (30.8%)	5 (7.14%)
<b>Osteotomy type</b>			
<b>Kater (High osteotomy)</b>	2 (1.4%)	2 (2.6%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Epker</b>	111 (75.0%)	58 (74.4%)	53 (75.7%)
<b>Epker modifié</b>	1 (0.7%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Hunsuck</b>	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (2.86%)
<b>Hunsuck-Epker</b>	1 (0.7%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (1.43%)
<b>Obwegeser-Dalpont</b>	23 (15.5%)	14 (17.9%)	9 (12.9%)
<b>Obwegeser-Epker</b>	1 (0.7%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Loncle (Supra-basilar osteotomy)</b>	7 (4.7%)	2 (2.6%)	5 (7.14%)
<b>Grafts in BSSO</b>	47 (31.8%)	33 (42.3%)	14 (20.0%)

## 2. Graft practices characteristics

Table III gives details on graft practices characteristics in BSSO among the 47 surgeons performing grafts. It seems that surgeons practicing in the private/mixed sector transplanted more frequently than surgeons in the public sector, although this was not significant.

A few surgeons declared to use more than one type of graft, this fact explains that there are more than 47 responses for this item. Many different types of grafts were used: autologous bone grafting (mandibular, maxillar, cranial, or hip), other bone grafting (xenograft, allograft). Maxillar bone harvest was performed only in case of associated Le Fort I osteotomy. No other type of biomaterial (titanium, ceramic) were used.

The main indication that prompted surgeons to perform grafts was the degree of mandibular advancement (78.7%). Other main indications were the patient background (34%) and the presence of an intraoperative notch (25.5%). It is interesting to note that only 5 surgeons (10.6%) declared to systematically perform bone grafting in BSSO. The main indications are shown in Figure 2.

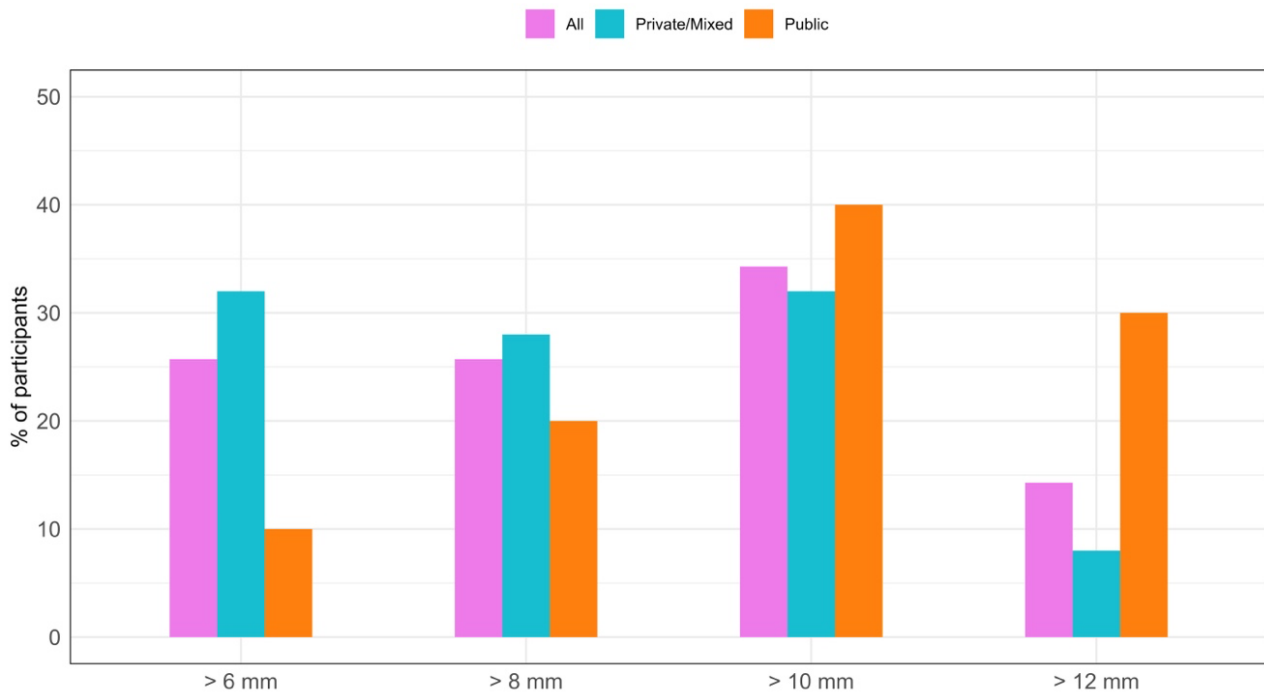


**Figure 2.** Indications of grafts between public and private/mixed surgeons.

**Table III.** Descriptive of participants who had already performed grafts in BSSO (n = 47).

	<b>All surgeons n = 47</b>	<b>Private &amp; mixed practice n = 33</b>	<b>Public practice n = 14</b>
<b>Proportion of osteotomy time with graft, %</b>			
<10%	26 (55.3%)	16 (48.5%)	10 (71.4%)
10-50%	13 (27.7%)	10 (30.3%)	3 (21.4%)
>50%	8 (17.0%)	7 (21.2%)	1 (7.14%)
<b>Graft types</b>			
<b>Autologous bone grafting (mandibular, maxillar), yes</b>	14 (29.8%)	7 (21.2%)	7 (50.0%)
<b>Autologous bone grafting (cranial), yes</b>	1 (2.13%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (7.14%)
<b>Autologous bone grafting (hip), yes</b>	5 (10.6%)	3 (9.09%)	2 (14.3%)
<b>Other bone grafting (xenograft, allograft), yes</b>	35 (74.5%)	26 (78.8%)	9 (64.3%)
<b>Graft indications</b>			
<b>Systematic, yes</b>	5 (10.6%)	4 (12.1%)	1 (7.14%)
<b>Degree of advancement, yes</b>	37 (78.7%)	26 (78.8%)	11 (78.6%)
<b>Background, yes</b>	16 (34.0%)	10 (30.3%)	6 (42.9%)
<b>Stability of the surgical set-up, yes</b>	8 (17.0%)	5 (15.2%)	3 (21.4%)
<b>Presence of an intraoperative notch, yes</b>	12 (25.5%)	10 (30.3%)	2 (14.3%)
<b>Osteosynthesis type, yes</b>	2 (4.26%)	2 (6.06%)	0 (0.00%)
<b>Osteotomy type, yes</b>	3 (6.38%)	2 (6.06%)	1 (7.14%)
<b>Pre-existing defect, yes</b>	1 (2.13%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (7.14%)

Figure 3 shows the proportion of surgeons who performed graft according to the exact degree of advancement (in mm) at which the indication for bone grafting is retained. It is interesting to note that the degree of advancement of 10 mm is the most chosen but also that many surgeons perform bone grafting for smaller degree of advancement (6 mm). This figure also shows very interestingly that the higher the degree of advancement was, the more public surgeons performed bone grafting unlike private or mixed surgeons who performed grafting independently from the degree of advancement.



**Figure 3.** Degree of advance.

### **3. Comparative analysis of graft practice according to participant's characteristics**

Regarding the type of activity of surgeons performing grafts, 14 (29.8%) had a public practice and 33 (70.2%) had a private or mixed practice (Table III). No difference could be observed regarding the number of retained indications of graft between private and public practice surgeons ( $p = 0.970$ ). There was also no significant difference ( $p\text{-value} = 0.052$ ) for the degree of advancement required for grafting between public and private/mixed surgeons.

### **4. Qualitative outcomes: expressed free comments**

The open-ended comments were mainly about the pros and cons of grafting based on the surgeon's personal experience. Many surgeons consider bone grafting beneficial for the correction or prevention of the notch, the reduction of the risk of pseudarthrosis and the stability of the surgical set-up. Some surgeons consider that post-operative edema can be prevented by bone grafting while others think the contrary. A few participants consider other bone grafting systematic indications: bad-split occurrence, complex malformation surgery or

asymmetry correction. Some surgeons consider that bone grafting should be considered only secondarily in case of post-operative complications such as the occurrence of pseudarthrosis or a notch. On the other hand, a few surgeons raised some negative consequences regarding bone grafting: increased risk of infection and increased operating time.

## DISCUSSION

Through this questionnaire, we sought to examine the practices of surgeons in France concerning the use of grafts in BSSO, as no standardized guidelines currently exist.

Out of a total number of 1000 maxillo-facial surgeons in France, it is estimated that only 500 of them regularly perform orthognathic surgery. We can say that a number of 148 responding surgeons in the present study can thus be considered as representative of current practice since it represents 29.6% of the total of orthognathic practicing surgeons. In addition, participants were geographically distributed throughout France.

Only 31.8 % of orthognathic surgeons had ever performed grafts and the indications that stood out, although not significant, seemed to be the degree of advancement (especially for advancements greater than 10mm), the patient background and the presence of an intraoperative notch.

The 10 mm advancement threshold appears to be a critical factor influencing grafting decisions. This threshold can be explained by biomechanical principles: when mandibular advancement exceeds 10 mm, there is often reduced contact between the proximal and distal bony segments at the osteotomy site, particularly at the inferior mandibular border. This creates a void that compromises the surface area available for natural bone healing. Additionally, large advancements generate increased tension in adjacent soft tissues, exerting unfavorable forces on the fixation system and bony segments, which may lead to instability, pseudarthrosis, or formation of a notch. Bone grafts, in such cases, can serve both as space fillers and structural supports, enhancing stability and facilitating bone regeneration. Several studies have shown that the use of grafts (particularly allografts) may reduce the occurrence of lower border defects in cases of large advancements[2,10,13-15].

Based on the study results and consistent with available literature, the main indications for bone grafting during BSSO can be grouped into four categories (Table IV). First, the degree of

mandibular advancement, particularly when exceeding 10 mm, was the most commonly cited indication. In such cases, the risk of inferior border defects, mechanical instability, and non-union increases due to insufficient bony contact between segments. Second, intraoperative findings, such as the presence of a visible notch or step-off between segments, may prompt the surgeon to perform immediate grafting to restore mandibular contour and continuity. Third, patient-related risk factors including age, active smoking, underlying diseases, and treatments such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)[3] are often considered as indications to reinforce bone regeneration with grafts. Finally, specific surgical scenarios, such as cases involving congenital or acquired malformations, facial asymmetries, or the occurrence of a bad split, may justify the use of grafts to ensure stability and minimize the risk of postoperative complications. In some cases, surgeons reported using bone grafts secondarily, in response to complications such as pseudarthrosis or persistent defects. These heterogeneous practices underline the lack of consensus in the field and reinforce the need for clinical studies to establish standardized grafting indications in BSSO.

**Table IV:** Main type of indications to perform bone grafting in BSSO.

<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>IV</b>
<i>= Degree of mandibular advancement</i>	<i>= Intraoperative findings</i>	<i>= Patient-related risk factors</i>	<i>= Specific surgical scenarios</i>
No consensus has been reached to date.	Presence of visible notch Step-off between segments ...	Age Active smoking Underlying diseases Treatments (NSAIDs) ...	Congenital malformations Acquired malformations Facial asymmetries Bad split ...

In this study, xenografts and allografts were more used than autologous grafts (74.5% vs 36.13%). This might be explained by a few differences between autologous and other grafts: no harvesting, no morbidity of the donor site, malleability of the sample. However, the gold standard remains autologous grafts because of its osteointegration capacity and its compatibility with the host[13,16].

No statistically significant difference was found in grafting indications between public and private/mixed surgeons. Nevertheless, a trend was observed whereby surgeons in the private/mixed sector used grafts more frequently and tended to prefer xenografts and allografts, while public sector surgeons made more use of autologous grafts. Finally, our results suggest a discrepancy between perceived usefulness and actual frequency of grafting, with many surgeons performing it in fewer than 10% of cases. This may reflect the ongoing debate over its preventive value versus its role in salvage situations. Clarifying the risk-benefit ratio of grafting in BSSO (particularly in large advancements) remains a priority for future research.

This study has some limitations. As it was based on a voluntary online survey, it is subject to response bias. Despite this, the study achieved a broad geographic and professional coverage, providing meaningful insights into current clinical practices in France.

In conclusion, our findings reveal the variability in grafting practices among French surgeons performing BSSO. While bone grafting is not systematically performed, it is more commonly indicated in cases of large mandibular advancements or when risk factors for poor healing are present. These results call for further prospective and comparative studies (both national and international) to better define the indications, materials, and outcomes of bone grafting in BSSO and ultimately develop evidence-based guidelines.

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## Etat des lieux sur les pratiques en France de la greffe dans le foyer d'ostéotomie lors des chirurgies d'avancée mandibulaire

### RÉSUMÉ

*Introduction* : L'ostéotomie sagittale bilatérale du ramus de la mandibule (OSBM) est une intervention très fréquente en chirurgie orthognathique. L'utilisation de greffe osseuse dans le foyer d'ostéotomie semble de pratique courante bien que peu documentée. L'objectif de cette étude est de décrire les pratiques courantes en France concernant la réalisation de greffe osseuse dans le foyer d'ostéotomie lors des OSBM.

*Matériels et méthodes* : Un questionnaire national a été réalisé et transmis aux chirurgiens pratiquant de la Chirurgie orthognathique en France.

*Résultats* : Cent-quarante-huit chirurgiens ont répondu au questionnaire, majoritairement des Chirurgiens Maxillofaciaux (96%). Seulement 31,8% des participants disent avoir déjà réalisé une greffe dans le foyer d'ostéotomie lors d'une OSBM et la majorité le font dans moins de 10% des cas. La principale indication est le degré d'avancée mandibulaire surtout pour les avancées de plus de 10mm. Différents types de greffes sont utilisées : greffe autologue (mandibule ou hanche), autre type de greffe osseuse (xéno greffe, allogreffe).

*Conclusion* : Cette étude montre la diversité des pratiques en France concernant la réalisation des greffes dans le foyer d'ostéotomie lors des OSBM. D'autres études prospectives semblent nécessaires pour évaluer l'intérêt de telles pratiques.

**Mots-clés** : Greffe osseuse ; Chirurgie Maxillo-faciale ; Chirurgie orthognathique

## Bone graft in bilateral mandibular sagittal split osteotomy: the current state of practice in France

### ABSTRACT

*Introduction*: Bilateral sagittal split osteotomy of the mandible (BSSO) is the most common orthognathic surgery procedure. The use of bone grafting seems widely used whereas its interest has not been shown to date. The aim of this study was to describe the current state of practice of bone graft in BSSO in France.

*Materials and methods*: An online survey was used to collect data about the use of bone grafting in BSSO procedures among French maxillofacial surgeons.

*Results*: One hundred and forty-eight surgeons responded to the survey, mostly maxillo-facial surgeons (96%). Only 31.8% of participants had already performed grafts in BSSO and the majority did it in less than 10% of cases. The main grafting indication was the degree of advancement especially for advances over 10mm. Different types of grafts were used, mainly: autologous bone grafting (mandibular or hip) or other bone grafting (xenograft, allograft).

*Conclusion*: This survey shows the diversity of practices in France regarding the use of grafting in BSSO. Further studies are needed to investigate prospectively the utility of such procedures.

**Keywords**: Bone grafting; Maxillofacial surgery; Orthognathic surgery