

The True Hare Lip—A Case Report

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A hare is a rodent quadruped having long ears and hind legs, a short tail and a divided upper lip in the midline. The term "hare lip" as it is usually used to describe the cleft of the lip in children dates back to the Tang Dynasty in 390 A.D.¹ It is, however, a misnomer and this term should be reserved for midline clefts of the upper lip.

Midline clefts of the upper lip are a rare anomaly². These clefts have been divided into two groups by Millard³. The first type is the result of agenesis of the fronto-nasal process and is accompanied by cerebral anomalies. The second type is described as a cleft of the median element with varying degrees of vertical separation. This second type of median cleft of the upper lip is a true "hare lip."

Etiology

The His⁴ theory of embryological development does not explain the occurrence of median clefts of the lip. Other embryologists⁵ have attributed this cleft to a median splitting of the central element between the median folds. Perhaps the best explanation is epithelial division after failure of mesodermal penetration of the median upper lip⁶.

Case Report

K. B., an eight month old girl was admitted to The Children's Hospital of Akron on May 22, 1972, with a history of a cleft lip. There was no family history of clefts and the mother had an uneventful pregnancy. Examination revealed a median cleft of the upper lip with a double frenulum and tubercle (Figure 1). On May 23, 1972, the lip was repaired by incising the margins, obtaining muscle to muscle union in the midline and closing the skin with a small white roll flap as described by Millard⁷. One year following surgery, the patient had a satisfactory result (Figure 2).

Discussion

Vertical clefts through the center of the upper lip are classified as median clefts. Those median clefts which involve only the median element require surgical correction. The treatment of these defects consists of approximation of the wound margins after reconstruction of the obicularis oris muscle. The mucocutaneous junction should be staggered to avoid any tendency toward notching.

Summary

A case report is presented of a median cleft of the upper lip. This deformity can truly be called a "hare lip." Reconstruction of the defect requires approximation of the obicularis oris muscle.



FIGURE 1.



FIGURE 2.

References

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