The alar-spanning suture is a surgical technique used by an experienced rhinoplastic surgeon to address certain nasal tip deformities. Wide nasal tip deformities with strong, convex lower lateral cartilages are best indicated for treatment with this technique. The alar-spanning suture can improve lateral crural position and eliminate dead space by refining and narrowing the supratip, often without requiring extensive dissection or additional strut grafting. We use operative photographs and an intraoperative video to demonstrate the alar-spanning suture technique, which is a useful addition to the armamentarium of any rhinoplastic surgeon.

Improvement of the wide, bulbous nasal tip is among the more challenging tasks in aesthetic rhinoplasty, especially in patients with strong convex lateral crura. The morphologic features of these deformities include combinations of bulbous, boxy, bifid, and trapezoid tips. These noses have an excessively broad alar cartilage complex and lack definition, often the result of strong, convex lower lateral cartilages. Additional factors include an overly obtuse domal or interdomal angle, cephalic positioning of the lower lateral cartilages, excessive nasal soft tissue, or a combination of these characteristics. The task of the rhinoplastic surgeon is correction of these deformities without jeopardizing structural integrity that may lead to nasal airway compromise or delayed aesthetic distortion.

Approaches to reshape the nasal tip have evolved and have been modified significantly during recent decades. Previous approaches used excessive excision of the alar cartilages, which in many cases led to disruption of minor and major tip support and in turn collapse, distortion, and an undesirable esthetic and functional result. More recent advancements have led to cartilage-sparing techniques that focus on contouring of the cartilages and preservation of natural support. These advancements include avoiding overresection of cartilages and using grafts and suture techniques that help achieve the desired shape with preservation of underlying structures. These techniques can reshape the alar cartilages and correct convexities to reduce the tip width. They can also modify rotation and projection of the nasal tip.

Video available online at www.archfacial.com

There are many approaches and techniques used to address the wide nasal tip. The principles of trimming, incising, morcelling, and suturing alar cartilages have been used for some time. We present the alar-spanning suture, a technique that can be used in the wide nasal tip to further narrow and eliminate excess residual tip and supratip width after placement of the single- and double-dome sutures. This technique allows further refinement of the alar complex by bringing together the cephalic margins of the lateral crus and reducing the width of the nasal supratip. The alar-spanning suture furthermore reduces the supratip dead space while adding additional strength to the lobular complex.

Author Affiliations: Department of Otolaryngology–Head and Neck Surgery, Indiana University School of Medicine (Drs Perkins and Sufyan), and Meridian Plastic Surgeons and Medical Skin Care (Dr Perkins), Indianapolis, Indiana.