

# Sexual Quality of Life after Bariatric Surgery

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## Background

Half of all bariatric procedures are performed on women of reproductive age.<sup>1</sup>

Studies have examined the impact of surgery on future pregnancies but less attention has been paid to female fertility and sexual function post surgery.

## Methods

A prospective cohort study of women of reproductive age (18-45 years) undergoing bariatric surgery is ongoing.

Participants are recruited preoperatively from tier 4 obesity services and followed for one year post-surgery.

A sexual quality of life-female (SQOL-f) questionnaire<sup>2</sup> is completed pre-operatively, and at routine reviews 3, 6 and 12 months post-operatively.

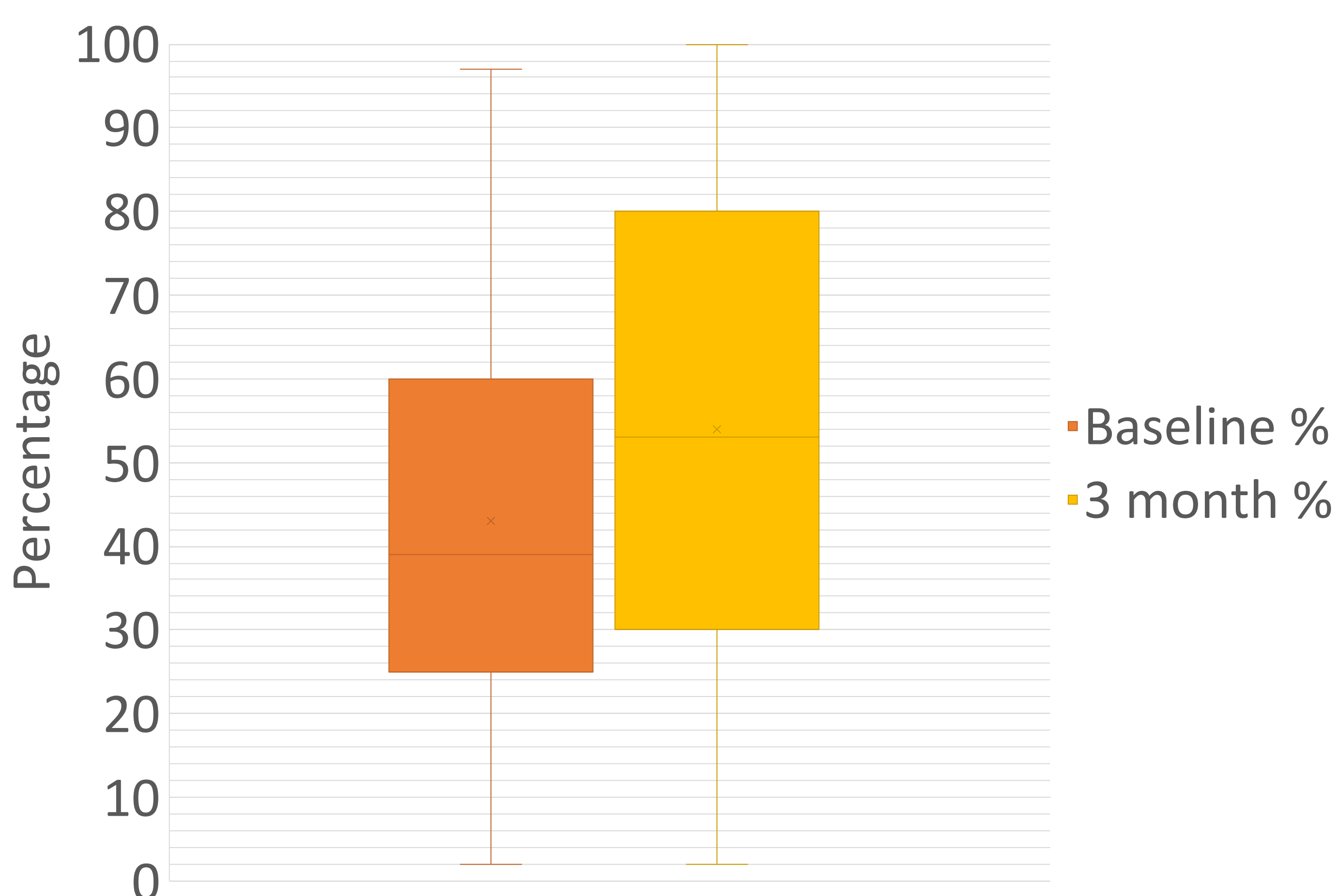
The SQOL-f can be completed regardless of sexual orientation or relationship status. There are 18 questions given a score from 0 to 5. Total scores are expressed as a percentage (higher score = better quality of life).

## Results

To date 39 women have completed the SQOL-f at baseline and at 3 months post-operatively.

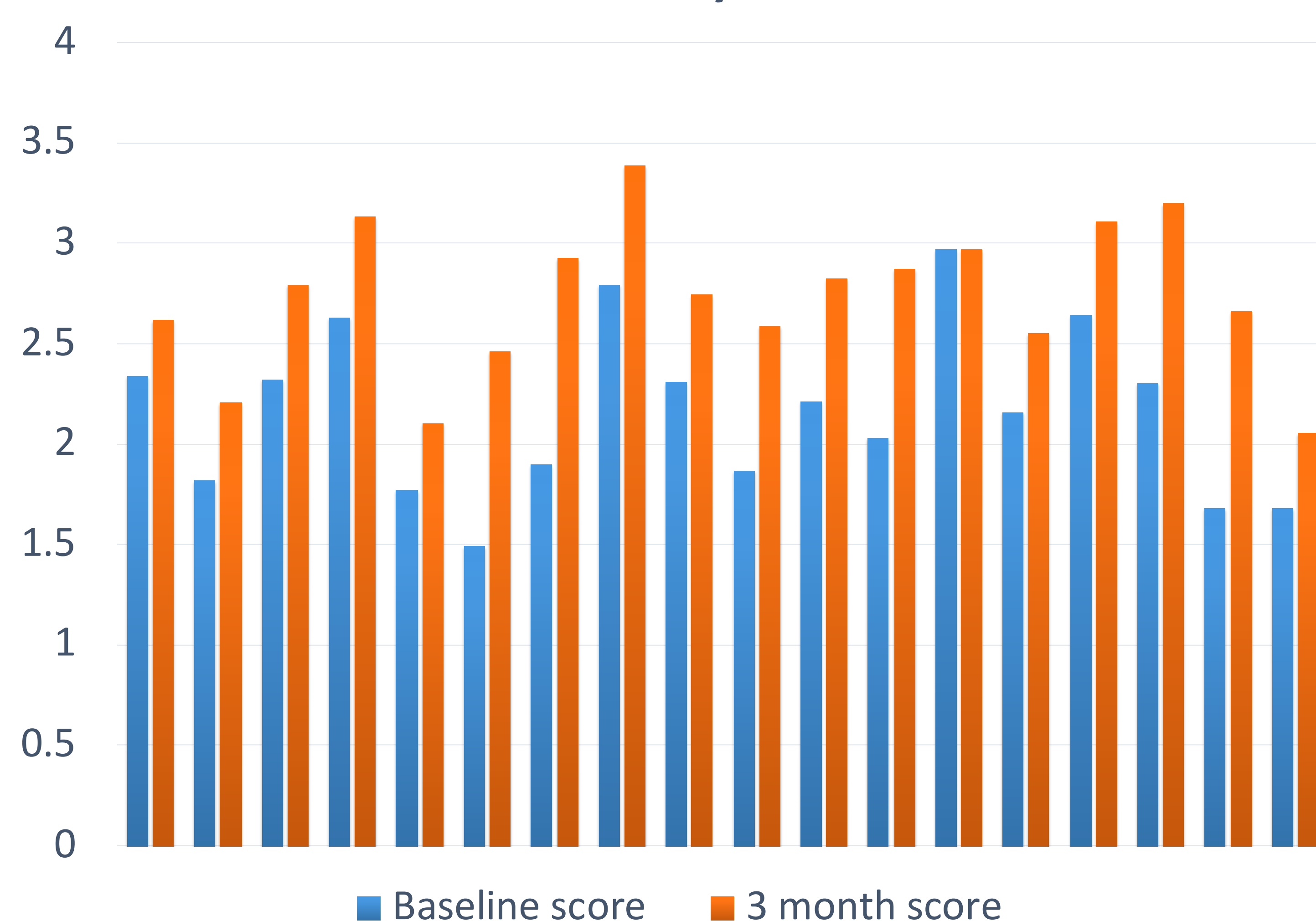
Demonstrated in figure 1 the median score at baseline was 39% (IQR 34%), increasing to 53% (IQR =50%) at 3 months post-operatively.

4/39 (10%) showed a decrease in their score from baseline to 3 months, 15/39 (39%) were unchanged (taken as <5%) and 20/39 (51%) showed an improvement in SQOL.



**Figure 1:** Box and whisker plot demonstrating SQOL scores (%) at baseline and 3months (n=39).

Mean Score by Question



**Figure 2:** Change in score by individual question from baseline to 3months (n=39)

Figure 2 demonstrates that all question showed improvement in mean score between baseline and 3 months, with the exception of one which remained unchanged.

*“ When I think about my sexual life, I feel I can talk to my partner about sexual matters”*

Body mass index (BMI) decreased from  $46 \pm 7.9$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> before surgery to  $37 \pm 6.8$  kg/m<sup>2</sup> at the time of the second questionnaire. All women experienced weight loss by this stage.

Degree of weight loss did not correlate with changes in score.

In free text comments 2 women responded:

*“I am more self conscious than pre-surgery, I hate how my body looks”*

and

*“my husband still sees me as fat and won't go near me”*

This offers insight into the reasons why some women showed no improvement or a deterioration in sexual quality of life.

## Conclusion

Interim analysis suggests improvement in sexual function in women of reproductive-age three months after bariatric surgery.

Whether this benefit persists as length of time from surgery increases and if improvements in SQOL translate into fertility outcomes requires further study.