



# Promoting Excellence In Ultrasound

## **Policies and Statements**

# **B1**

### Policy On Diagnostic Ultrasound Services

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*June 1991, Reaffirmed May 1996, Revised September 1999*

1. All diagnostic ultrasound examinations should be conducted at the request of, and by or on behalf of, a registered medical practitioner.
2. At present there have been no independently verified studies that have demonstrated any adverse biological effect of diagnostic ultrasound in vivo in humans.

As a matter of principle, patients should be examined only by appropriately qualified personnel. The examination should be structured to provide the required diagnostic information at minimum exposure.

3. Ultrasound services should only be provided by those medical practitioners who have competence in the specific examinations they undertake personally, or for which they issue reports. The medical practitioner should be involved in continuing professional education.
4. The medical practitioners to whom patients are referred for ultrasound examination will either perform the examination themselves or be responsible for the examination being performed by an accredited medical sonographer.
5. Where a sonographer performs the ultrasound examination under supervision of a medical practitioner:
  - i) The medical practitioner should ensure that the sonographer is appropriately qualified and capable of performing the requested ultrasound examination.
  - ii) The medical practitioner should be available for advice and be capable of extending the examination where appropriate.
  - iii) The level of direct supervision of the sonographer by the medical practitioner should be appropriate for the training and experience of the sonographer.
6. Where a sonographer performs the examination without (the on-site) supervision of a medical practitioner (e.g. emergencies or in rural locations) the reporting medical practitioner should ensure that:
  - i) There are protocols and guidelines in place to enable proper triaging of the patient where extension of the examination by the medical practitioner is required to effect a diagnosis.
  - ii) That all hard copy (etc.) is reviewed and a report issued in a reasonable time frame.

- iii) The sonographer performing the examination is suitably qualified and registered to undertake such examinations.
7. The medical practitioner should regularly attend premises where ultrasound examinations for which he/she is responsible are performed and should ensure that:
    - i) Any ultrasound examination performed is in the best interests of the patient and is carried out using appropriate and properly maintained equipment.
    - ii) Appropriate facilities are available for patients.
  8. The medical practitioner is responsible for setting local department or practice guidelines on such matters as:
    - i) How much of the examination should be shown and demonstrated to the patient.
    - ii) How much information the sonographer might independently pass on to the patient.
    - iii) How the examination should be recorded, what record should be provided for the referring medical practitioner and what, if any, should be made available to the patient.
  9. Patient identification, the date of service and the name of the medical practitioner or medical practice responsible for the conduct of the ultrasound examination should be imprinted in, or otherwise recorded with, each film or other record.
  10. A written report should be issued on all ultrasound examinations by the responsible medical practitioner. A report should be made available immediately if necessary. Hard copy films or other records should be made at the time of any referred diagnostic ultrasound examination.
  11. A register of ultrasound examinations performed should be kept by each medical practice.
  12. While all medical practitioners should be free to request ultrasound examinations dependent on their clinical experience and judgment, a specialist in diagnostic ultrasound has a duty to decide whether a requested investigation is appropriate, having regard to the level of diagnosis required and the cost effectiveness of the examination.
  13. It is the responsibility of the sonographer to ensure that they are appropriately qualified and accredited. They should not practice independently of an appropriately qualified medical practitioner and the medical practitioner should provide encouragement for the sonographer to participate in on-going education.
  14. Specialists in diagnostic ultrasound should collaborate in undergraduate and postgraduate education and in continuing education of ultrasound professionals and also other medical practitioners to assist them to provide appropriate ultrasound referrals.



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