ASUM

Standards of Practice

Promoting ultrasound excellence



Guidelines, Policies and Statements

Code of Conduct

Adopted by Council June 2018

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Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine (ASUM) is a multidisciplinary society whose mission is to advance the clinical practice of diagnostic medical ultrasound for the highest standards of patient care. Therefore, a primary aim of ASUM is to promote, educate and disseminate standards of ultrasound practice in this continually developing specialty.

These guidelines are recommended for consideration of ethical principles, respectful approaches in medical care, but also in upholding the integrity of the profession in general. This is an expectation ASUM holds for its membership. All ultrasound practitioners have a primary duty to all clients to provide the highest standard of care possible and to always act in their best interests. Maintenance of quality standards in every imaging procedure, continuing professional development, consistent use of evidence-based clinical judgements and experience in making recommendations will help ensure all ultrasound practitioners practise in a professional and safe manner in accordance with principles of best practice.

The ASUM Code of Conduct affirms that in addition to knowledge and technical expertise in sonography, excellent ultrasound care requires ultrasound practitioners to be skilled in clinical judgement, decision making and collaboration with colleagues and others engaged in healthcare delivery. In accordance with the Code, it is recognised that ultrasound practitioners need to adequately train to qualify for initial accreditation, and then maintain adequate knowledge and skills for the ongoing provision of safe and effective standards of care.

1.2. Purpose

The Code outlines the requirements to be used by our members to inform and guide professional and ethical practice in diagnostic medical ultrasound and patient care.

Ultrasound practitioners must provide clinical care consistent with the prevailing standards of their specialty and local clinical requirements. ASUM expects its members understand these guidelines, appreciate their importance in helping guide safe, high quality imaging procedures and in providing the utmost treatment to patients in their care, and as representatives of the profession, adhere to the standards of professional attributes, skills and behaviour outlined.

1.3. Scope/Applicability

These guidelines are applicable to all ultrasound practitioners involved in the clinical practice of diagnostic medical ultrasound.

All ASUM Members including Students are expected to understand and adhere to the Code of Conduct. Any complaints or alleged misconduct will be investigated in accordance with applicable ASUM policies.

In accordance with ASUM Constitution Rule 18, if any Member who wilfully refuses or neglects to comply with its provisions or is guilty of any conduct which in the opinion of the Council is unbecoming of a Member or prejudicial to the interests of ASUM, the Council may by resolution,

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subject to Rule 18.7, censure, suspend, disqualify, expel or retain that Member as a Member or impose such other conditions or requirements as the Council considers appropriate.

2. Ultrasound practitioners provide services in a safe and ethical manner

2.1. An ultrasound practitioner must provide health services in a safe and ethical manner.

2.2. Good communication and mutual respect is recognised as an essential part of good practice.

2.3. Ultrasound practitioners will be courteous, respectful and compassionate in their dealings with clients and other ultrasound practitioners or health care professionals. They will not discriminate against, bully or sexually harass another healthcare professional or other person.

2.4. Without limiting 2.1, ultrasound practitioners must comply with the following. An ultrasound practitioner must:

a) maintain the necessary competence in his or her field of practice
b) not provide health care of a type that is outside his or her experience or training, or provide services that he or she is not qualified to provide
c) only recommend imaging services that serve the needs of clients
d) recognise the limitations of the imaging procedure he or she can provide
e) have a sound understanding of any possible adverse interactions between the imaging procedure/s being provided or prescribed and any other medications, therapies or treatments, whether prescribed or not, that he or she is, or should be, aware that a client is taking or receiving, and advise the client of these interactions.
f) provide health services in a manner that is culturally sensitive to the needs of his or her clients.

3. Ultrasound practitioners obtain informed consent

Prior to commencing an imaging procedure or service, an ultrasound practitioner must ensure that informed consent appropriate to that service has been obtained from the client, person responsible, legal guardians, via an interpreter if necessary, and complies with the laws of the state or territory jurisdiction.

3.1. Informed Consent must be specific to each client's imaging procedure, voluntarily given, properly explained and understood.

3.2. Consent may be withdrawn at any time without consequence, and without having to give a reason.

4. Ultrasound practitioners engage in appropriate conduct in relation to advice regarding imaging procedure/s

4.1. An ultrasound practitioner must accept the right of his or her clients to make informed choices in relation to their health care.

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4.2. An ultrasound practitioner must not attempt to dissuade a client from seeking or continuing ultrasound procedure/s and/or medical treatment.

4.3. An ultrasound practitioner must communicate and co-operate with colleagues and other health service providers and agencies in the best interests of their clients.

5. Ultrasound practitioners report concerns about the conduct of other sonographers/sonologists or health care workers

5.1. An ultrasound practitioner who, in the course of providing imaging procedure/s or care, forms the reasonable belief that another ultrasound practitioner or health care worker has placed or is placing clients at serious risk of harm must refer the matter to the relevant state or territory health complaints body.

5.2. Ultrasound practitioners will not tolerate bullying or harassment and will seek to avoid or eliminate such behaviour in the workplace.

5.3. A whistle-blower who reports misconduct or dishonest or illegal activity that has occurred within that same organisation will not be victimised.

6. Ultrasound practitioners take appropriate action in response to adverse events

6.1 An ultrasound practitioner must take appropriate and timely measures to minimise harm to clients when an adverse event occurs in the course of providing imaging procedure/s or care.

6.2 Without limiting 6.1, an ultrasound practitioner must:

a) ensure that appropriate first aid is available to deal with any adverse event
b) obtain appropriate emergency assistance in the event of any serious adverse event
c) promptly disclose the adverse event to the client and take appropriate remedial steps to reduce the risk of recurrence
d) report the adverse event to the relevant authority, where appropriate.

7. Ultrasound practitioners adopt standard precautions for infection control

As each ultrasound procedure involves contact between an ultrasound transducer and the patient's skin, mucous membranes, or sterile tissues, failure to adhere to minimum infection control standards, including the proper cleaning and reprocessing of the equipment and transducers, increases the risk of pathogen transmission and subsequent infection. Therefore:

7.1 An ultrasound practitioner must adopt standard precautions for the control of infection during the course of providing imaging procedure/s or care.

7.2 Without limiting subclause (6.1), an ultrasound practitioner who carries out any invasive procedure must comply with relevant state or territory law under which such procedures are regulated.

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7.3 Ultrasound practitioners should be aware of the Joint ASUM/ACIPC Guidelines for Reprocessing Ultrasound Transducers, based on the standards of AS/NZS4187:2014 and AS/NZS4185:2006. These guidelines are suggested as a minimum, unless there are local requirements which are required to be followed.

8. Ultrasound practitioners diagnosed with infectious medical conditions do not put clients at risk

8.1 An ultrasound practitioner who has been diagnosed with a medical condition that can be passed on to clients must ensure that he or she practises in a manner that does not put clients at risk.

8.2 Without limiting 8.1, an ultrasound practitioner who has been diagnosed with a medical condition that can be passed on to clients must take and follow advice from a suitably qualified registered health practitioner on the necessary steps to be taken to modify his or her practice to avoid the possibility of transmitting that condition to clients.

9. Ultrasound practitioners must not misinform their clients

9.1 An ultrasound practitioner must not engage in any form of misinformation or misrepresentation in relation to the services or procedures he or she provides, or the qualifications, training or professional affiliations he or she holds.

9.2 Without limiting 9.1, an ultrasound practitioner must:

a) not use his or her possession of a particular qualification to mislead or deceive clients or the public as to his or her competence in a field of practice or ability to provide imaging procedures
b) provide truthful information as to his or her qualifications, training or professional affiliations
c) not make claims either directly to clients or in advertising or promotional materials about the efficacy of imaging procedures or services he or she provides if those claims cannot be substantiated.

10. Ultrasound practitioners do not practise under the influence of alcohol or unlawful substances

10.1 An ultrasound practitioner must not provide imaging procedures or care to clients while under the influence of alcohol or unlawful substances.

10.2 An ultrasound practitioner who is taking prescribed medication must obtain advice from the prescribing health practitioner or dispensing pharmacist on the impact of the medication on his or her ability to practise and must refrain from treating or caring for clients in circumstances where his or her capacity is or may be impaired.

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11. Ultrasound practitioners with certain mental or physical impairment/s do not place clients at risk

11.1 An ultrasound practitioner must not provide services or care to clients while suffering from a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including an addiction to alcohol or a drug, whether or not prescribed) that places or is likely to place clients at risk of harm.

11.2 Without limiting 10.1, if an ultrasound practitioner has a mental or physical impairment that could place clients at risk, the ultrasound practitioner must seek advice from a suitably qualified health practitioner to determine whether, and in what ways, he or she should modify his or her practice, including stopping practice if necessary.

12. Ultrasound practitioners do not financially exploit clients

12.1 An ultrasound practitioner must be honest and transparent in financial arrangements with clients. They must not financially exploit their clients nor exploit the vulnerability or lack of knowledge of clients when providing or recommending services.

12.2 Without limiting 12.1, an ultrasound practitioner must:

a) only provide imaging procedures or services to clients that are designed to maintain or improve clients' health or wellbeing
b) not accept or offer financial inducements or gifts as a part of client referral arrangements with other health care workers
c) not ask clients to give, lend or bequeath money or gifts that will benefit the health care worker directly or indirectly.

13. Ultrasound practitioners do not engage in sexual misconduct

13.1 An ultrasound practitioner must not engage in behaviour of a sexual, emotional, physical or inappropriate close personal nature or relationship with a client.

13.2 An ultrasound practitioner should ensure that a reasonable period of time has elapsed since the conclusion of the therapeutic relationship before engaging in a sexual relationship with a client.

14. Ultrasound practitioners comply with relevant privacy laws

An ultrasound practitioner must comply with the relevant privacy laws that apply to clients' health information, including the Privacy Act 1988 (Cth) as appropriate, and any relevant state or territory legislation that may apply.

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15. Ultrasound practitioners keep appropriate records

15.1 An ultrasound practitioner must maintain accurate, legible and up-to-date clinical records for each client consultation and ensure that these are held securely and not subject to unauthorised access. This may include patient data, clinical records and copies of informed consent.

15.2 An ultrasound practitioner must take necessary steps to facilitate clients' access to information contained in their health records if requested.

15.3 An ultrasound practitioner must facilitate the transfer of a client's health record in a timely manner when requested to do so by the client or their legal representative.

16. Ultrasound practitioners are covered by appropriate insurance

An ultrasound practitioner should ensure that appropriate indemnity insurance arrangements are in place in relation to his or her practice.

17. Ultrasound practitioners are encouraged to display the Code and other information

17.1 An ultrasound practitioner should display or make available a copy of each of the following documents at all premises where the ultrasound practitioner carries on his or her practice:
   a) a copy of the ASUM Code of Conduct.
   b) a document that gives information about the way in which clients may make a complaint to the relevant state or territory health complaints entity.

17.2 Copies of these documents may be displayed or made available in a manner that makes them easily visible or accessible to clients.

18. Ultrasound practitioners recognise that teaching, supervising and mentoring junior sonographers/sonologists and trainees is important for their development, the care of patients and the future of the profession

Contributing to the support, assessment, feedback and supervision of colleagues or trainees and students helps to contribute to the standards of the profession and the developmental needs of future practitioners. Considerations in the execution of such supervisory roles may include:

18.1 When providing an assessment, a Supervisor will provide clear directions, be proactive and only include accurate and verifiable information, ensuring that all feedback is respectful and timely.

18.2 Supervisors will not discriminate against, bully, or sexually harass a Student/Trainee or any other healthcare professional.

18.3 Ultrasound practitioners engage in ethical examination processes and comply with appropriate ASUM Education regulations.

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19. Related/Supporting Documents

1. ASUM Policy Guidelines for Reprocessing Transducers
2. ASUM Policy Scanning of Live Subjects for Teaching Purposes during ASUM Meetings
3. ASUM Discussion Paper on Consent

20. Supporting Information/References

The following documents inform this policy:

1. Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, Final Report: A National Code of Conduct for Health Care Workers, 2014, Canberra, COAG Health Council, pp.74-77.
2. Australasian Sonographers Association (ASA), Code of Conduct for Sonographers, October 2014.
3. Medical Board of Australia, Good Medical Practice: A Code of Conduct for Doctors in Australia, 2014.
4. Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. Code of Conduct, 2016.
5. Health and Disability Commissioner, New Zealand, Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, Regulations 1996 ('The Code'), Health & Disability Commissioner, Wellington, New Zealand 1996.
6. NZ Government, The Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994, Reprint as at February 2018, Wellington, NZ Parliamentary Counsel Office, Retrieved from http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1994/0088/latest/DLM333584.html

The following definitions are relevant to this policy:

Term	Definition
Ultrasound Practitioner	A sonographer, sonologist or medical professional who provides a medical ultrasound (whether or not the person is registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law).
Duty of Care	Owing a patient, the provision of safe and effective care and the delivery of good quality imaging procedures
Standard of Care	The reasonable level of care or clinical expertise expected in sonography; performing our duty of care to the expected level we are professionally trained to deliver

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Negligence	A breach of one's duty of care through omission or harm; this breach causes harm or damage to the patient; not performing to the professional standard of care

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