ASUM

Standards of Practice

Promoting ultrasound excellence



Guidelines, Policies and Statements

Statement on the Education, Training and Supervision of Trainee Sonographers

Adopted by Council September 2011

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Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine

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1. Introduction

1.1. The Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine (ASUM) supports and promotes best ultrasound practice by endorsing those training programs that develop safe and competent sonographers.

1.2. All trainee sonographers who provide an ultrasound service should be enrolled in an accredited training program, hold an appropriate trainee accreditation and be supervised in their practice by a qualified sonographer who has extensive experience in the relevant scanning procedures.

1.3. Accredited ultrasound qualifications may be professional or academic:

1.3.1. Training programs leading to accredited professional qualifications should be offered only by recognised representative professional societies, associations or colleges

1.3.2. Training programs leading to accredited academic qualifications should be offered only by:

- schools or faculties subject to university governance
- schools or faculties subject to accreditation and regular audit by a statutory authority
- statutory authorities

1.4. Training programs leading to qualifications should be regulated and audited to ensure that:

- training standards reflect current professional practice
- adequate learning support is provided
- evidence-based assessment methodologies are employed to ensure that all major curriculum goals are achieved

1.5. Trainee sonographers should be trained in general areas, be assessed at regular intervals and should demonstrate competence in general areas before proceeding in a planned sequence to speciality areas.

2. Sonographer Education

2.1. Sonographer education courses should have a strong emphasis on supervised professional vocational training.

2.2. Sonographer education courses should have a structured theoretical component with regular associated assessment.

2.3. Relevant professional bodies, employer groups and service users, representing those to whom the sonographers will ultimately be responsible, should be represented on the curriculum and advisory committees of the institutions conducting the course.

2.4. Sonographer education course curricula should reflect the professional needs of sonographers and the communities they serve.

2.5. The curriculum for sonographer education courses should contain instruction and assessment of the following elements:

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2.5.1. Physical principles, instrumentation, bioeffects and image optimisation.

2.5.2. Relevant anatomy, physiology, pathology and embryology.

2.5.3. Skills training in patient management, image acquisition and image interpretation.

2.5.4. Ethical principles.

2.5.5. The application of evidence-based assessment methodologies to measure:

- mastery of the knowledge base
- the application of knowledge in the clinical environment
- appropriate application of advanced imaging skills
- appropriate communication including preparation of professional reports
- capability to research and provide evidence-based reports of normal and abnormal clinical presentations

2.6. Assessment of clinical skills should involve a workplace assessment by trained sonographer-examiners who have not been involved with the candidate's training or employment.

3. Trainee Sonographers

3.1. ASUM supports the training of appropriately trained and experienced graduates as medical sonographers to practice medical ultrasound in Australia and New Zealand.

3.2. ASUM supports the recruitment of mature people from a variety of health-related backgrounds as trainee sonographers.

3.3. All trainee sonographers who provide an ultrasound service should be enrolled in an accredited training program and be supervised in their practice by an Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR) Accredited Medical Sonographer (AMS) or a New Zealand Medical Radiation Technologists Board (NZMRTB) Registered Sonographer who has extensive experience in the relevant scanning procedures and specialties being taught and supervised.

3.4. ASUM recognises the courses accredited by ASAR and NZMRTB as the appropriate courses leading to accreditation as a sonographer. Before being admitted to ultrasound training a person should:

3.4.1. Hold a relevant professional allied health degree or a degree in health or medical science, or

3.4.2. Hold current registration in Australia or New Zealand as a Registered Nurse, Radiographer or Midwife, or

3.4.3. Hold a degree in another field and have completed a bridging course as specified by the ASAR-accredited or NZMRTB-accredited training course provider

3.5. Employers should provide sufficient trainee positions to, at least, provide for their own staffing needs. A person should only be employed as a trainee sonographer, if the following requirements are met:

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3.5.1. Before being employed into a training position, the trainee must provide evidence that he/she is currently enrolled, or is currently being offered enrolment, in a recognised course accredited by the ASAR or NZMRTB.

3.5.2. A trainee sonographer should only be employed into a position and on premises where adequate resources exist, to enable their training and supervision. These resources include, but are not limited to, release of experienced senior sonographers for supervision and to conduct training, an adequate library, access to relevant current journals and periodicals, and exposure to a sufficiently varied case load to enable training in all relevant areas of ultrasound.

3.6. Supervision of Trainee Sonographers.

3.6.1. Supervision of a trainee sonographer requires the presence of a supervisor on the premises who is available and has sufficient time to participate in the examination at the required level.

3.6.2. Supervisors of trainee sonographers should be ASAR AMS, NZMRTB Registered Sonographers or sonologists, or be practitioners of recognised skill and experience in ultrasound.

3.6.3. The role of the supervisor is:

- to provide the trainee sonographer with training in protocols and skills
- to ensure that the trainee sonographer is always working within the areas of his/her competence
- to ensure that the service received by the patients is of the highest professional standard and is in no way compromised by the level of skill of the trainee sonographer

3.6.4. The degree of participation of the supervisor will depend on the competence and experience of the student.

Levels of supervision may include:

- in person supervision of the entire examination
- extension of the examination or rescanning of any areas needing clarification, after the initial examination has been performed by the student
- review of the hard copy record and discussion of the case, before the patient leaves the premises, to enable rescanning to be carried out where necessary

3.7. Persons presently employed in performing ultrasound scans, who are not accredited by the ASAR or registered with the NZMRTB as sonographers or trainee sonographers, should be asked by their employers for a binding statement of intent to enrol in and complete a suitable course leading to qualification.

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