AMERICAN ACADEMY OF EMERGENCY MEDICINE POSITION STATEMENT: ULTRASOUND SHOULD BE INTEGRATED INTO UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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POLICY STATEMENT

It is the position of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine that ultrasound should be integrated into the core curriculum of undergraduate medical education.

BACKGROUND

Medical diagnostic ultrasound (US) has been used by various specialties since the 1950s. Contemporary point of care ultrasound (POCUS) was first researched and utilized by emergency physicians in the mid 1980s. Emergency physicians have formally defined and pioneered POCUS during the past 2 decades. Research in a broad array of applications indicates improved patient care via procedural safety and success, improved diagnostic accuracy, decreased procedural pain, decreased time to critical interventions, and decreased time to discharge (1–8).

DISCUSSION

The practice of POCUS continues to grow. In the most recent decade, there has been an expanding role for POCUS across many specialties in medicine. As hospital-wide US applications have increased, many health-care institutions struggle to meet the growing educational needs of faculty and residents to obtain standardized US training. In addition, multiple specialties have POCUS fellowships and specialized POCUS training during other fellowships.

Leaders in the field of US technology in medical education have implemented longitudinal US training programs into the core medical school curriculum. Early research demonstrates that the technology is viewed by students as enjoyable and useful in various specialties (9–14). In addition, studies demonstrate better student understanding of complex core anatomic and physiologic concepts and improved physical examination skills with the incorporation of US into the curriculum (10,13,15–20). Practical application of POCUS also provides early clinical correlates, which further engages the students (9,11).

Given the broad and diverse use of US in contemporary medical practice, multiple medical societies have supported the incorporation of US into the core medical school curriculum. The American Institute for Ultrasound in Medicine, a multidisciplinary society, has advocated for the integration of US training into core medical school curricula. In 2013, at the 2nd World Congress on US in Medical Education, >85 medical schools convened to discuss US in medical education.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Incorporation of US into the core medical school curriculum enhances learning of core concepts, improves understanding of the physical examination, engages students in active learning, and is viewed as useful and enjoyable by students. Early integration of US in medical training incorporates a key, broadly used, and growing medical technology, which better prepares current students for practice they will encounter as the next generation of physicians.

REFERENCES