

Radiologists, primary users of non-cardiac ultrasound

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Although non-radiologist physicians have contributed to the widespread use of point-of-care (POC) ultrasound, radiologists remain the primary users, according to a study in the November issue of the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*. POC ultrasound is defined as an ultrasound performed (and interpreted) by the clinician at the bedside.

A recent paper in the [New England Journal of Medicine](#) by Moore and Copel indicated that miniaturization and a drop in costs have facilitated the growth of non-cardiac POC [ultrasound](#) by [clinicians](#) and that the concept of an "ultrasound [stethoscope](#)" is rapidly moving from the theoretical to a reality.

"The commentary by Moore and Copel raises the question of how widespread the use of non-cardiac ultrasound has become among non-radiologist physicians and how quickly such use is growing with the advent of hand-carried ultrasound devices. We used a nationwide database to investigate these questions," said David C. Levin, MD, lead author of the study.

To determine the rate of utilization of non-cardiac ultrasound by [radiologists](#) and other specialists, researchers at Thomas Jefferson University looked at Medicare Part B databases for 2004 to 2009. Between 2004 and 2009, there was a 21 percent increase in the overall utilization rate of non-cardiac ultrasound. POC ultrasound by non-radiologists amounted to 41 percent of all studies done in 2009, while radiologists performed 55 percent. Multiple non-radiologic specialties

are involved, but radiologists' involvement is far higher than any other single specialty.

"The role of radiologists in non-cardiac ultrasound remains quite strong; however progressive miniaturization of ultrasound equipment may change that. As a result, utilization trends will require further watching and additional research in the coming years," said Levin.

More information: www.jacr.org/

Provided by American College of Radiology

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