

New training statement defines Level III echocardiography competencies for first time

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A new advanced training statement from the American College of Cardiology, the American Heart Association and the American Society of Echocardiography defines the training requirements for performing advanced echocardiographic procedures, or "Level III" training, for the first time.

Cardiovascular [echocardiography](#), or ultrasound, is an important diagnostic imaging technique used to assess cardiac anatomy and function and to help guide many therapies for heart conditions. Proper training is important to ensure positive clinical outcomes and patient safety.

While three levels of training for echocardiography have long been recognized, this is the first time that Level III training for echocardiography has been formally defined. Level III training represents the highest level of knowledge, experience, skill and behavior in a given field.

"All cardiologists should have a basic understanding of echocardiographic techniques—their strengths, limitations and appropriate use," said Susan E. Wiegers, MD, professor of medicine at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine at Temple University, Senior Associate Dean of Faculty and chair of the writing committee.

"Although it is expected that most, if not all, fellows will achieve Level II competency in echocardiography during their three years of general cardiology training, this document describes the more focused, in-depth

experience required for Level III competency."

This document complements the ACC's 2015 Core Cardiovascular Training Statement (COCATS 4), which defines the training requirements for all clinical cardiologists. Training in echocardiography for nine cumulative months is generally required to gain the level of experience necessary for Level III competency. However, the determination of whether a fellow has achieved Level III knowledge and skill will ultimately be assessed based on the competencies defined in this training statement.

The document outlines the length of training, the types of disorders that should be reviewed, the number of various procedures typically required for competence and the [knowledge base](#) and skill required to be an advanced echocardiographer. It acknowledges that the number of procedures needed to achieve competency may vary from one individual to another, and the education and training of advanced echocardiographers should occur in a structured clinical learning environment, usually within a formal cardiology fellowship program. This training statement outlines the resources that are typically required in these [training](#) programs and includes requirements for echocardiographic lab accreditation and teaching faculty guidelines.

The writing committee recognizes that the indications, technology and capabilities of cardiac ultrasound are continually advancing. The competencies defined in this document equip the advanced echocardiographer with the knowledge needed to acquire new skills as they emerge.

"The use of cardiovascular ultrasound is a key component in the care of many patients in the hospital and outpatient office as well as guiding interventional cardiac procedures in the catheterization lab and the operating room," Wiegers said. "It is important to define what is

required to become a Level III echocardiographer."

Provided by American College of Cardiology

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