

More guidance needed for primary care physicians who perform ultrasound diagnostics

May 24 2022



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While the use of point-of-care ultrasonography (POCUS) in the primary care setting may lead to faster and more precise diagnoses and referrals,

overscreening can lead to unintended harms to patients, including over- or under-diagnosis and overtreatment. A new study published in *Annals of Family Medicine* examined general practitioners' (GP) understanding of appropriate ultrasound use versus how early adopters actually use it in their practices.

Researchers found that 24.5% of GPs interviewed for the study conducted POCUS for exploratory purposes in practice, rather than for focused examinations. Additionally, while all surveyed GPs indicated that they felt formalized POCUS training should be a requirement, 75% of the GPs performed examinations outside of anatomic areas where they had previously received training.

These findings suggest that the use of POCUS by early adopters in primary care is widespread. It is not known if this puts patients at risk. The researchers argue that these findings indicate a need for evidence-based guidelines to support GPs in choosing which exams to perform and strategies for developing and maintaining scanning competency.

More information: Camilla Aakjær Andersen et al, General Practitioners' Perspectives on Appropriate Use of Ultrasonography in Primary Care in Denmark: A Multistage Mixed Methods Study, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2022). DOI: [10.1370/afm.2795](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2795). www.annfammed.org/content/20/3/211

Provided by American Academy of Family Physicians

Citation: More guidance needed for primary care physicians who perform ultrasound diagnostics (2022, May 24) retrieved 24 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-05-guidance-primary-physicians-ultrasound-diagnostics.html>

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