
Policy Regarding Ultrasound for Non-Medical Reasons

Note re. Guidelines and Policies

This document is a physician **guideline** approved by the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia.

Guidelines contain recommendations endorsed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia. The College encourages its members to be familiar with and to follow its guidelines whenever possible and appropriate. Note that guidelines may contain references to College policies.

Policies reflect the position of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia. Physicians licensed with the College are expected to be familiar with and to comply with College policies.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify for physicians their obligations with respect to ordering and performing diagnostic ultrasounds.

Introduction

As more advanced ultrasound technologies are becoming available, expectant mothers and their families have been requesting fetal keepsake videos and portraits. In addition, requests are made for the performance of an ultrasound to determine the sex of the baby. Physicians are under increasing pressure to perform and/or order ultrasound examinations for non-medical purposes.

There are a number of organizations that have formal statements that provide that the use of ultrasound for entertainment or fetal gender determination purposes is inappropriate. Health Canada, the Nova Scotia Association of Radiologists, the Canadian Association of Radiologists, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada, the Canadian Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers, and the American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine are just some of the organizations that oppose the use of ultrasound for these purposes.

College Policy

Physicians must ensure that all diagnostic imaging examinations are ordered and conducted for appropriate clinical indications. The use of ultrasound only to view the fetus to obtain a picture or video of the fetus or only to determine the gender of the fetus without a medical indication is inappropriate and contrary to good medical practice.

The purpose of an imaging examination should always be to obtain information relevant to the diagnosis or treatment of a patient, or both. Therefore, when requesting the examination, the physician should specify the clinical indications and the information needed.

Should it be brought to the attention of the College that a physician is ordering or providing diagnostic tests (including ultrasound) inappropriately, the College will investigate and take action, where warranted. In addition, ordering or providing ultrasounds for non-medical reasons and billing MSI for this service may be viewed by the College as professional misconduct.

Acknowledgments

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia gratefully acknowledges the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario for providing information used in producing this policy.

Document History

Approved By Council October 13, 2006

Approximate date of next review: October 2011

Unless otherwise noted, this material is © College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia. This material may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes, in whole or in part, provided that credit is given to the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia or other original source identified in this document. Any other use requires permission from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia.