American Board of Emergency Medicine

Recognition for Clinical Ultrasonography Expertise
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Why have these FAQs been published? Currently, there is no nationally accepted formal recognition for emergency physicians with significant expertise in Clinical Ultrasonography (CU). The American Board of Emergency Medicine (ABEM) seeks to offer a Designation of Focused Practice. The Designation of Focused Practice is a new type of formal recognition of significant physician expertise in a focused area, recently approved by the American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS), ABEM’s umbrella organization.

2. How are CU and EUS viewed by ABEM? Emergency Ultrasound (EUS) is an ultrasound examination performed at the bedside by a provider in the Emergency Department. EUS is used to address a specific clinical question, and involves image acquisition, image interpretation, and the immediate integration of the information into the patient’s care.

Clinical Ultrasonography (CU) involves expanded competencies that distinguish it from standard EUS. CU integrates advanced ultrasound applications, requires more sophisticated interpretations, enhances training for all learners, provides quality oversight, and conducts CU-related research.

DESIGNATION OF FOCUSED PRACTICE (DFP) would be issued by ABEM. This is a new type of recognition, formally associated with the physician’s primary certification, that the ABMS piloted with Hospital Medicine and approved in 2017.

Clinical experience will be required for physicians to be eligible for this designation. While the ABMS does not require that physicians complete fellowship training, ABEM has decided to require completion of CU fellowship training in place of or in addition to clinical experience.

3. How would formal recognition of emergency physician expertise in CU affect emergency physicians?

- CU experts believe formal recognition could accelerate the use of ultrasonography in emergency departments, with common high standards, quality control procedures, and protocols, fostering widespread improvement in patient care.

- Physicians who achieve certification or designation of focused practice in CU would likely experience greater recognition of their expertise.

4. What has to happen for ABEM to offer a designation of Focused Practice in CU?

- To offer a DFP in Clinical Ultrasonography, ABEM has applied to the ABMS and is undergoing a rigorous review process. The review will involve all of the other 23 ABMS Members Boards, a period of public comment, and three ABMS committees.
• ABEM has approved a multi-organizational collaborative body to determine which CU fellowship programs will meet ABEM’s eligibility criteria.

• A practice pathway will be offered that is similar in design to that of existing ABEM subspecialties.

• A certification examination in Clinical Ultrasonography will be required, as will participation in a continuing certification program.

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