



ASE American Society of
Echocardiography
Heart & Circulation Ultrasound Specialists

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EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE: JUNE 14, 2010

**WEB-BASED TOOL DEVELOPED TO TRACK APPROPRIATE ORDERING OF
HEART ULTRASOUND EXAMS**

Preventing unnecessary exams could result in saving significant health care dollars

San Diego, CA – JUNE 14, 2010 – A pilot study presented at the 21st Annual Scientific Sessions of the American Society of Echocardiography (ASE) will unveil an online, web-based tool to track appropriate ordering of heart ultrasound exams. The tool represents an important alternative to insurance company pre-authorization prior to the performance of heart ultrasound procedures, which many fear could limit necessary patient access to the valuable diagnostic modality.

“Appropriately using heart ultrasound exams can help significantly reduce unnecessary health care spending—a major topic in health care reform,” said Dr. R. Parker Ward of the University of Chicago. “Many payors are pushing to have every patient pre-authorized by the insurance company prior to allowing the heart ultrasound study be performed; which is a costly administrative burden to health care providers and can disrupt or delay care for the patient.”

Heart ultrasound exams are the most common imaging procedure to examine the heart's function performed in the United States, with more than 20 million studies performed annually. The exams are popular, because they are non-invasive and less expensive than other imaging exams such as CT scans, nuclear scans, and MRI procedures, and do not expose the patient to radiation.

Currently, health care providers are encouraged to be familiar with the recently published document on appropriate use criteria for heart ultrasound exams, produced by the American Society of Echocardiography, and other related organizations, when determining whether or not to order a heart ultrasound exam. Adherence to this criteria will soon be required as part of the accreditation process for heart ultrasound laboratories.

In the study, researchers sought to determine whether the newly developed electronic tool could efficiently apply the appropriate use criteria to determine the medical necessity of a heart ultrasound test. After reviewing 258 cases, they found that 94 percent of the time, the new electronic tool reached the same conclusion as time consuming detailed patient chart reviews. Researchers concluded that the use of this new electronic tool

allows rapid and accurate application of the appropriate use criteria at the point of service. This conclusion suggests that this electronic tool may be a rapid and effective alternative to time consuming and costly insurance company pre-authorization requirements.

“Electronic tools which apply the appropriate use criteria are needed for rapid and feasible application in clinical practice,” said Dr. Ward. “This study suggests that such a tool may help providers and insurance companies meet their mutual goal of ensuring access to needed tests within a reasonable time frame while reducing inappropriate utilization in the most cost-effective manner possible.”

The study was conducted by Drs. R. Parker Ward, Ibrahim N. Mansour, Nicole M. Bhave, Federico Veronesi and Roberto M. Lang at the University of Chicago in Chicago, Ill.

The American Society of Echocardiography (ASE) is a professional organization of physicians, cardiac sonographers, nurses and scientists involved in echocardiography, the use of ultrasound to image the heart and cardiovascular system. The organization was founded in 1975 and is the largest international organization for cardiovascular ultrasound imaging. For more information on ASE, visit www.asecho.org or ASE’s public information site, www.SeeMyHeart.org.

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