

Why Sonograms Should Be Performed Only When Medically Indicated

The American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine (AIUM) and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) believe that the use of ultrasound without a medical indication is inappropriate and contradicts the responsible practice of medicine.

As more advanced ultrasound technologies are becoming available, expectant mothers and their families have been requesting fetal keepsake videos and portraits. As such, ultrasound professionals are facing increasing pressure from their patients to perform ultrasound examinations for nonmedical purposes.

The medical community has expressed concern about performing ultrasound examinations simply to provide a pretty picture or determine fetal sex.

Although there are no confirmed biological effects on patients at the present time, the possibility exists that such biological effects may be identified in the future. Therefore, the AIUM recommends that ultrasound should be used only when the patient's physician indicates that it will provide medical benefit to the patient.

Immediate Past AIUM President Alfred B. Kurtz, MD, warns, "An entertainment sonogram is a misuse of ultrasound technology and should not be offered. It should not replace a medically indicated ultrasound examination."

The FDA also warns, "exposing the fetus to ultrasound with no anticipation of medical benefit is not justified. It has cautioned that persons who promote, sell or lease ultrasound equipment for making keepsake fetal videos should know that the FDA views this as an unapproved use of a medical device. Those who subject individuals to ultrasound exposure using a diagnostic ultrasound device (a prescription device) without a physician's order may be in violation of state or local laws or regulations regarding use of a prescription medical device."

Thus, this practice believes it is better to be safe than sorry. Therefore, we perform sonograms only when medically indicated.



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