Point Of Care Ultrasonography (POCUS)

Background

Point of Care Ultrasonography (POCUS) is defined as an ultrasound examination performed at the bedside by the treating provider to answer focused clinical questions relevant to the care of the patient. POCUS findings are integrated into the patient's care, taking into account the patient's clinical presentation, history, physical examination, and investigations, to assist in clinical diagnostic and therapeutic decisions and/or to assist with procedural guidance.

POCUS is now endorsed by national and international societies for use in the care of medical patients at the bedside. Additionally, POCUS devices are now more portable and affordable, which will serve to further increase their use in clinical settings.

Given the increasingly widespread uptake of POCUS across Alberta, it is anticipated that there will be significant variability in its use. Currently, there are no provincial recommendations or guidelines in place to not only ensure the safe use of POCUS but also safeguards patient confidentiality.

Purpose of the POCUS Project

The purpose of the POCUS project is to develop a provincial approach to promote the safe and effective use of POCUS for clinical assessments and bedside procedural guidance on adult patients under the care of general internal medicine and respiratory and to help guide the use of POCUS across other areas in Alberta Health Services (AHS).

Project Objectives

- Develop a province-wide systems approach to the use of POCUS.
- Develop best practice recommendations and evidence-informed practice guidelines (including training and supervision; image storage infrastructure; guidance on which commercially available devices are compliant with AHS privacy measures; outline how devices should be cleaned and disinfected; and identify which procedures should be performed (and how) under ultrasound guidance).
- Adapt existing educational materials (such as the online POCUS device disinfection course, developed with AHS IP&C; minimal criteria for performing lung ultrasound scans, developed by the Canadian Internal Medicine Ultrasound (CIMUS) group).
- Develop accredited online interactive training resources for ultrasound-guided paracentesis & thoracentesis.
- Develop indicators/dashboard to capture relevant data for program evaluation and monitoring.

Project Approach

The project is guided by a working group comprised of stakeholders representing a variety of clinical areas and sites across the province, including both urban and rural sites. The project will also seek feedback from Patient Representatives to ensure patient experience indicators are reflective of their priorities and concerns.

Best practice recommendations and evidence-informed practice guidelines will be co-developed with key stakeholders and a communication and implementation plan will be developed to support the dissemination and adoption of the recommendations & guidelines.

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