

STATEMENT ON PATIENT INFORMATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

The concept of informed consent is based on the principle that a doctor has a duty to disclose to a patient information which allows the patient to make a reasonable decision regarding his/her own management / treatment.

There is no legal requirement that written patient consent be obtained prior to an ultrasound examination. However, it is good practice to ensure that patients are fully informed about the nature and conduct of the examination so that they can give verbal consent. It is desirable that this information is provided in written format, is given prior to their attendance and is reviewed by the person undertaking the scan at the time of attendance.

Written consent will be required for some interventional and / or intracavitary ultrasound examinations and ultrasound practitioners should be familiar with Professional Body guidance relating to these examinations. (1)

The BMUS Scientific & Education and Safety Committees have suggested that additional information may be appropriate with regard to ultrasound safety and for examinations performed in research centres and / or teaching hospitals as follows:

- ***Are there any risks?***

Ultrasound scanning does not involve X-rays and so does not have any of the risks associated with ionising radiation. Indeed it has been shown to be one of the safest of medical techniques, and is used routinely to scan babies, both before and after birth, children and adults. It has been used to provide valuable pictures and other diagnostic information for four decades, with no evidence of any harm.

However, just as ordinary sounds that are too loud can damage our hearing, so very high levels of ultrasound can produce undesirable effects, for example by warming the tissue through which the ultrasound beam passes. As a precaution, the doctor or sonographer will take every care to ensure that the level and duration of the ultrasound examination are no more than are necessary to obtain the diagnostic image or information.

If contrast agents are likely to be used additional information would be appropriate; e.g: A very small proportion of ultrasound examinations may involve an injection of a tiny amount of "contrast agent" into a vein, usually in the arm, to improve the quality of the picture or to increase the amount of information obtained from the scan. All current agents are regarded as extremely safe with a very low chance of any side effect. If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, or if you have heart problems you should let the person giving the injection know.

Further detailed technical information about the safety of diagnostic ultrasound may be found under our Safety Statements on this website.

- ***Will my results be used for anything else?***

You may be asked to give permission for information from your examination to be used for teaching purposes or in research studies. Any information used in this way is always used anonymously - only the healthcare professionals involved in the research will know you have participated in a study and know which information relates to you. You should always get a full explanation of the study and will be helping to improve healthcare in the future if you agree to participate. You do not have to agree to participate in these studies and your care will not be affected if you decline.

REFERENCES:

1. The Safe Use of Ultrasound in medical Diagnosis. Ed G ter Haar & F Duck, The British Medical Ultrasound Society / The British Institute of Radiology, February 2000