



## Sonographer Independent Prescribing

### BMUS Position Statement

- The critical shortage of radiologists in the UK has resulted in many imaging examinations that were previously exclusively undertaken by radiologists being delegated to non-medical imaging practitioners. Ultrasound is a modality where a large component of the workload is delivered by sonographers who are increasingly being asked to undertake more complex diagnostic and interventional ultrasound examinations. Without this advanced sonographic practice most radiology departments would be unable to manage their demand.
- Advanced sonographic practice may require prescription and administration of a limited number of drugs. Examples include ultrasound contrast agents, oral and injectable pain relief for biopsy and drainage procedures and anaesthetic and steroid joint and soft tissue injections.
- Sonography is not recognised as a registered profession by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Most sonographers are currently professionally registered as diagnostic radiographers. Under current legislation diagnostic radiographers cannot train to become independent prescribers in contrast to many other similar professional groups.
- Most sonographers currently administering drugs do so under the framework of Patient Group Directions (PGDs). The British Medical Ultrasound Society (BMUS) supports the use of locally devised and governed PGDs to allow sonographers to carry out procedures requiring drug administration in a safe and controlled framework. Currently this will be the normal scheme of work for most sonographers. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommendations on Patient Group Directions should be followed.
- BMUS is aware that the use of PGDs is no longer regarded as the optimal method of medicines prescription by several expert groups who instead express a preference for individualised, patient specific, prescription for the majority of clinical care. PGDs are recommended by these groups in the context of a short-term solution as part of an agreed plan towards individualised prescription.
- In many regions in the UK it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain approval for PGDs. Several health care providers have indicated a preference for independent prescribing as the framework for medicines administration by non-medical professionals. There will therefore be situations in which it is impossible or undesirable for sonographers to work under PGDs; this may become more widespread should PGDs fall further out of favour in the UK. In this scenario BMUS supports approved additional training for sonographers to add independent prescribing to their HCPC registration. Until sonography is recognised as a separate

profession by the HCPC this will require the option of independent prescribing to be introduced for the recognised profession of diagnostic radiography.

- Full formulary prescribing by sonographers is unlikely to be required, independent prescribing from a specified formulary (as suggested in previous consultation by NHS England) would be the preferred option.

References:

[https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/independent-prescribing-radiographers/user\\_uploads/consult-indepndnt-prescrib-radiographers.pdf](https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/independent-prescribing-radiographers/user_uploads/consult-indepndnt-prescrib-radiographers.pdf)

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/mpg2/chapter/Recommendations#considering-the-need-for-a-patient-group-direction>

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/quality-pgds-7-steps-to-success/>

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/patient-group-directions-pgds-for-administration-of-contrast-media-in-radiology-services/>