



## **Statement for the General Public on the Safety of Medical Ultrasound Imaging**

Ultrasound was first used in medical imaging fifty years ago, and today accounts for about a quarter of all imaging procedures. In medical circles, it is widely recognized that ultrasound is an extremely useful tool, with benefits for patients that greatly outweigh any potential risks as long as it is used for medical purposes.

Numerous scientific studies have provided reassuring evidence that ultrasound imaging is not harmful to adults, children, or the human fetus or embryo. However, it is known that some modern ultrasound scanners are capable of producing subtle heating and other effects inside the human body. Two widely quoted studies from the 1990s suggest that women scanned during pregnancy may be slightly more likely to give birth to left-handed or ambidextrous boys than would otherwise be expected.

Hence, the British Medical Ultrasound Society considers ultrasound imaging to be safe when it is performed prudently, for a clear medical purpose, by properly trained professionals, using well maintained equipment. As with most other types of medical imaging, all unnecessary exposure to the human body should be avoided. In particular, ultrasound should not be used on pregnant women solely for 'entertainment' or 'bonding' purposes.

**Prepared by the Safety Group of the British Medical Ultrasound Society**

**20<sup>th</sup> March 2012**