



Accreditation in Adult Transthoracic Echocardiography

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Message from the Chairman

Dear friends and colleagues,
The launch of European Accreditation in Transthoracic Echocardiography is an exciting moment for the Working Group on Echocardiography and for the European Society of Cardiology. It represents an opportunity for all those performing cardiac ultrasound to advance themselves through the achievement of an internationally recognised credential.

This is a European collaboration which in itself is an important achievement. An enthusiastic and expert team will run a tough but fair process of volunteer assessment to identify those with the knowledge and skill to perform and report echocardiograms, which may then be adopted in each country in accordance with the national laws for medical practice. For those who achieve accreditation we hope this will be the start of a lifelong pathway of learning and development.

In this leaflet, we outline details of the accreditation process, where to find further information and how to register for the first exam to be held at EuroEcho 7 this December in Barcelona.

We would encourage physicians and sonographers throughout Europe to seek Accreditation in Adult Transthoracic Echocardiography as a mark of recognition for their knowledge and skill, for the credit that this brings to their department and for the assurance this brings to their patients of the high standards of their work.

Yours truly,
Prof. Fausto J. Pinto,
Chairman,
ESC Working Group on Echocardiography

Outline of the Accreditation Scheme in Adult Echocardiography

Introduction

The ESC's mission is to improve the quality of life of the European population by reducing the impact of cardiovascular disease. The WGE supports this mission and believes that by improving access to, and the quality of, cardiac ultrasound we can help the diagnosis and treatment of cardiovascular disease.

Why are we establishing an accreditation scheme in transthoracic echocardiography?

One of the main aims of the WGE is to raise standards in echocardiography across Europe. In order to promote this, the WGE, after much consultation is developing an accreditation process for all practitioners of echocardiography. By establishing a standard and inviting cardiologists and sonographers to seek accreditation, we hope to encourage learning and practical training in echo labs throughout Europe. It is not our aim to rigidly standardise the practice of echocardiography, but to set a standard for knowledge and practical skill in the performance and reporting of echocardiograms to which people can aspire.

Why should you seek accreditation?

Accreditation is voluntary and will not affect the statutory requirements for practitioners of echocardiography within the countries of the ESC. Accreditation is not restricted to current members of the WGE.

If you practice echo or are learning to echo as a physician, sonographer or other health care professional, accreditation will set a target standard, guide learning and training, and ultimately reward you with a credential that will be recognised internationally. This scheme will initially operate in parallel with local qualifications if available. The training process, by encouraging learning, use of textbooks, perhaps attendance at training courses and meetings, will benefit not just yourself but also your echo lab. Your patients, your colleagues and your employers will benefit from the confidence that accreditation brings and the training and learning that it requires.

The accreditation process

Accreditation consists of three parts: learning to echo; passing a written assessment (exam); and submitting a logbook of echo studies.

The most important part of the process, of course, is learning to echo!

We recommend learning within a recognised echo lab and seeking supervision, teaching and training. Please read textbooks to gain theoretical knowledge. Do attend local and, where possible, regional, national and international training courses and meetings. It is essential to practice echocardiography including interpretation and reporting of studies.

Application for accreditation is recommended only after core skills in echocardiography have been achieved. All applicants need a supervisor who may be a recognised echo expert such as a national working group member or local echo lab director.

To apply you need to complete the application forms available from the Heart House and on the WGE website. You need to send the completed forms with the fee (€150) to the Heart House and you will be registered for the accreditation process and for the next exam (see details and contact overleaf).

The exam is held twice a year. *The first exam will be held at the EuroEcho meeting in Barcelona on December 6th, 2003.* The exam consists of multiple-choice questions in English, but using standard echo terminology and with a glossary of terms in a number of European languages. All questions will have a stem and four possible responses, one of which will best answer the question. The first half of the exam will be questions testing theoretical knowledge of ultrasound physics and all aspects of transthoracic echocardiography. The second half will consist of MCQs based on echo studies shown as clips and stills from real patient examinations on screens in the exam room.

After passing the exam, the final stage is the submission of a logbook of 250 transthoracic echo studies performed and reported over a 12 month period within a year of passing the exam.

On passing the logbook the applicant's name is passed to the WGE for the award of accreditation in transthoracic echocardiography.

Accreditation is valid for 5 years. Renewal of accreditation will require evidence of continuing practice and learning in the field of echocardiography.

Assessment

The exam is set by a committee of examiners from across Europe. An external examiner monitors the process and the questions are continuously validated. The exam is marked by computer for speed and accuracy.

The logbooks are graded by two independent examiners with regular audit by the examination committee currently chaired by Dr Kevin Fox.

Scheme organisation

The WGE has established two committees to oversee the accreditation process. Under the auspices of Chairman *Prof. Fausto J. Pinto* and the elected officers of the WGE, an accreditation committee runs the process. An accreditation assessment committee independently runs the exam and the grading of logbooks. The administration of the accreditation process is based at the European Heart House.

Training

The assessment of candidates goes hand in hand with offering and encouraging training. The WGE Education Committee under the leadership of *Dr Frank A. Flachskampf* is running a training programme in transthoracic echocardiography in parallel with the establishment of the accreditation process.

Further information on this course is available at <http://www.escardio.org/society/WG/wg7.htm>.

Further details and application forms

Full details including the syllabus, details of the exam with sample questions, details of the logbook and application documentation are available on the ESC website (www.escardio.org) and from the Heart House.

To apply you need to complete the application forms which will be available in August from the Heart House and the WGE website, through www.escardio.org or <http://www.escardio.org/society/wg/wg7.htm>.

Send the completed forms with the fee (€ 150) to the Heart House and you will be registered for the accreditation process and for the next exam.

Please send the fee by bank transfer (details below), specifying the purpose of your transfer, i.e. "Accreditation 12/03":

Account owner: SEC WG7 ECHOCARDIO

Bank name: Banque Populaire de la Cote d'Azur, Nice

Account number: 37019042359

IBAN

FR76 1560 7000 6537 0190 4235 927 SWIFT
CCBPFRRPNC

Contact: *Ms Barbara Lefevre*, e-mail: blefevre@escardio.org.