Results of a UK wide survey on the use of point of care ultrasound (POCU) in the Acute Medical Unit

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Aim
To ascertain information around the use of point of care ultrasound (POCU) on the Acute Medical Unit, including attitudes to POCU on the AMU, frequency of use, and the level of training undertaken.

Methods
An online survey was constructed by the authors and circulated to all SAM registered members, alongside social media and trainee network invites. Note: No question was forced answer, hence the variable denominators

Results
A total of 276 people responded, including 100 Consultants and 151 registrar-level clinicians. The majority of these (74%) who were trained or in training were doing so in Acute Internal Medicine (AIM). Only 11.4% respondents had no practical experience in ultrasound (US) or echocardiography.

Key points
- 87% respondents feel POCU is an essential skill to be used in the AMU
- POCU is used widely on the AMU, often without formal accreditation and/or training
- POCU regularly speeds up or alters clinical decision making for those who undertake it
- 95% respondents believe every AMU should have a dedicated ultrasound machine

Conclusions
This survey is the first of its kind looking at the use of POCU within a medical specialty. It shows that enthusiasm for POCU on the AMU is high and that it’s use is commonplace among clinicians, often altering or speeding up clinical decisions. It also highlights that much of this use is without formal accreditation, suggesting a potential governance/patient safety issue. These data support the development of AIM specific ultrasound training standards

Competing interests: The authors are part of a working group tasked with developing POCU guidelines for use on the AMU

Figure 1: What experience and/or training do you have in point of care ultrasound (n=272)

Figure 2: What experience and/or training do you have in point of care echocardiography (n=270)

Figure 3: How often, on average, do you use POCU in clinical practice? (n=167)

Figure 4: How often on average does your use of POCU change and/or speed up decision making? (n=155)

Figure 5: How much do you agree that every AMU should have a dedicated US machine for the use of trained individuals? (n=165)

Figure 6: How much do you agree that POCU is an essential skill to be used in the AMU? (n=262)