

# Institute in Limited Obstetric Ultrasound & Ultrasound Practicum

## PRE-TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS

Achieving Competency in Limited Obstetric Ultrasound is a *VERY* challenging process. This Memo should be read carefully, and the Ultrasound Pre-Training Questionnaire completed to ensure that a candidate meets these reasonable factors related to sonography training.

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Performing ultrasounds is a complex and multifaceted skill requiring use of advanced technology, optimized physical and mental capabilities, diligence, study, and practice. In the medical field, sonographers typically go to school for two or more years and then take national boards in order to be registered as Registered Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (R.D.M.S.).

In order to train nurses in a condensed course on limited ultrasounds per the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) guidelines, nurses need certain prerequisite skills and capabilities. After training thousands of nurses over the decades, NIFLA has become painfully aware that those who lack any of the skills and capacities listed below are certain to face challenges in learning sonography and it greatly decreases their ability to pass competency assessments, even with extended training. Unfortunately, even nurses who have had long successful careers have faced challenges in achieving competency.

Training a nurse (or other qualified medical professional) to perform limited obstetric ultrasound is a substantial investment of time and financial resources. Nothing is worse than spending a large amount of time, money and effort to train a nurse, only to have her/him fail competency assessments all because she/he was not fully vetted beforehand. If a nurse cannot master competency, this most likely will necessitate additional training, thus increasing the expense and number of scans most likely needed to achieve competency. There is also a higher risk that competency may not ever be achieved.

There have been numerous instances over the years that NIFLA has tried to train otherwise experienced, competent and successful nurses who have not been able to master the complex new skill of sonography to a level of competency acceptable under the national guidelines. If the trainee cannot achieve competency as assessed according to AWHONN guidelines, she/he cannot scan. To allow otherwise puts your Center, your Medical Director and, more importantly, your patients at risk.

If your nurse candidate does not meet the skills and capacities listed below, she/he can still be an extremely valuable part of the team at your pregnancy clinic, and even still serve as the Nurse Manager with another qualified professional performing the ultrasounds. There are numerous vital roles she/he can perform, such as pregnancy testing, medical intake, chaperoning the ultrasound exam, STI testing, and health education, nursing assessments, continuing quality improvement, HIPAA Privacy Officer, OSHA Safety Officer, etc.

## I. TRAINING NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE COMPETENCY IN LIMITED ULTRASOUND

**First Step-** NIFLA's didactic course, the Institute in Limited Obstetric Ultrasound, which complies with national guidelines, is the best foundational academic education for beginning sonography.

**Second Step** – After the academic course, the trainee needs to perform a minimum of 50-75 directly supervised hands-on training scans to establish competency. The supervision must be by a qualified medical professional.

**Third Step** - Upon completion of the 50-75 training scans, skills must be assessed and documented for competency by a person qualified to perform the assessment. "Scope of practice" directives in most states require documented competency before performing new procedures, such as sonograms. To overlook this critical step of documented competency puts the patients at medical risk and the organization at legal risk.

## II. PRE-TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS:

- Medical professional currently licensed as an RN, PA, NP, CNMW, MD, or DO in good standing.
- Solid computer skills: comfortable with latest technology, track ball/mouse, uploading digital images, electronic medical records.
- Working knowledge of OB anatomy/physiology, willingness to perform both abdominal and transvaginal scans (necessary in early pregnancy).
- Good vision with visual discrimination to differentiate between subtle differences in shades of gray scale tissue, recognizing anatomical landmarks, with attention to fine detail.
- Steady hands, with good hand and eye coordination: able to use the right hand to manipulate the transducer with very fine motor movements, eyes continually observing the screen, while using the left hand to adjust controls on the computer-based console.
- Spatial ability: a category of reasoning skills refers to the capacity to think about objects in three dimensions and to draw conclusions about those objects from limited information. This skill is highly critical for the diagnostic purposes of sonography, as one must be able to view a two-dimensional black and white image on the screen (comprised of 256 shades of gray) while mentally correlating anatomy of the patient's body and transducer movements necessary to obtain diagnostic quality images.
- Ability to multi-task and observe many things at the same time.
- Able to stand for long periods, and to reach, grasp and apply pressure with the transducer.
- Ability to recall information: consistently remember numerous steps necessary in following a scanning protocol and obtaining fetal heart rates.
- Commitment to ongoing study (recommend 5-10 CEUs per year in sonography), growth, and availability on a weekly basis.
- Ability to perform approximately 100 scans per year after initial training to maintain competency.

Please contact Audrey Stout, VP of Medical Services at: [astout@nifla.org](mailto:astout@nifla.org), if you would like to discuss this matter or have further questions.

# Ultrasound Pre-Training Questionnaire

## Reasonable Factors Related to Sonography Training Qualifications

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1) Physical Factors

- |   | Yes                      | No                       |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Any problems standing and/or sitting for extended periods of time?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Problems with upper extremity mobility?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Current ability to hold right arm steady for duration of ultrasound?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Sufficient strength in right arm to hold transducer for duration of ultrasound?   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • In order to obtain obstetric images with one hand scanning, the left hand must operate the computer controls on the console at the same time. Ability for both hands to be working simultaneously but in different modes? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • History of injury or surgeries to neck/shoulder/arms/wrists?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Good vision with ability to discriminate subtle differences in gray scale?  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### 2) Computer Aptitude

In general, rate your computer skills (ability to use mouse, upload images, understand software)  
Scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (highly proficient): \_\_\_\_\_

Sonographer will need to be able to create and input measurements onto an Ultrasound Report, upload into EMR, transfer files.

Scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (highly proficient): \_\_\_\_\_

### 3) Spatial Ability

Rate your ability to think about objects in 3 dimensions (based on limited information) and to draw conclusions about those objects.

Scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (highly proficient): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **4) Length of Training**

The training consists of traveling to and attending a three-day course. Then hands-on supervised scans of which the duration can be up to 8 -10 full days/8 hours a day (spread over a 2-week time period).

Acceptable to you? Yes  No

#### **5) Knowledge**

Are you familiar with OB anatomy/physiology and willing to perform abdominal and vaginal scans?

Scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (highly proficient): \_\_\_\_\_

#### **6) Commitment**

Are you willing to make a commitment to serve the Center for at least a year or two after your training is complete? Yes  No

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. This information will be helpful to determine, based on your capabilities/limitations, if you are a candidate for training.

For any questions regarding qualifications for this training,  
please contact Audrey Stout, VP of Medical Services at: [astout@nifla.org](mailto:astout@nifla.org)