

Echocardiography training at the University of Queensland

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TO THE EDITOR: We read with interest McLean's review of international recommendations on competency in critical care ultrasound.¹ Echocardiography has an important role in treatment of the critically ill patient, and training options have been limited, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. For this reason, since the beginning of 2011 we have offered the Graduate Certificate in Critical Care Echocardiography, a joint venture of the University of Queensland and the Departments of Cardiology and Intensive Care at Princess Alexandra Hospital.² We were surprised that this program was not included in his discussion, particularly as it addresses the shortfalls, which McLean raised, of other courses on offer.

The University of Queensland course requires the development of theoretical knowledge and reporting skills, coupled with hands-on experience of scanning supervised by an echocardiography practitioner in the centre in which the student is located. It is consistent with the framework proposed in the international expert statement that McLean refers to for practitioners to attain "advanced" critical care echocardiography competency,³ and with the level 2 competency of the American Society of Echocardiography.

Students enrolled in the University of Queensland course may opt for training and endorsement in both transthoracic and transoesophageal echocardiography. This training complies with the recommendations for advanced critical care echocardiography in the international expert statement.³

Alternatively, students may opt for training and endorsement in transthoracic echocardiography alone. Not all practitioners will have sufficient caseload to maintain competency in transoesophageal echocardiography. This is par-

ticularly likely for critical care physicians in Australia practising outside of major metropolitan centres. It seems unreasonable to insist that they train in a modality that they will not use in their practice. Our position is similar to that adopted by the British Society of Echocardiography in their critical care certification program.

Critical care echocardiography is in its infancy in Australia. We encourage critical care physicians who are interested in echocardiography to undertake comprehensive training, which must include experience in image acquisition and ultrasound physics and image formation. It is time to catch up with the Europeans, who have led the way so far.

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References

- 1 McLean A. International recommendations on competency in critical care ultrasound: pertinence to Australia and New Zealand. *Crit Care Resusc* 2011; 13: 56-8.
- 2 Graduate Certificate in Critical Care Echocardiography. Graduate certificate information. <http://www2.som.uq.edu.au/som/FutureStudents/Postgrad/GCE/Pages/default.aspx> (accessed Jul 2011).
- 3 Expert Round Table on Ultrasound in ICU. International expert statement on training standards for critical care ultrasonography. *Intensive Care Med* 2011; 37: 1077-83. □