**FACILITATING THE USE OF ULTRASOUND SCANNING IN GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE IN THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

The **purpose of this study** was to determine the feasibility of promoting ultrasound scanning in general medical practice across the UK as an additional GP skill.

Although ultrasound training has been offered to GPs for the past two decades, there are very few GPs who have undergone training and an even smaller number who regularly practice the skill.

The **aim of the research** was to determine why so few GPs have taken up training and to assess whether anything could be done to promote the service if there was sufficient enthusiasm amongst students, trainees and GPs.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The major component of the research was quantitative in nature, i.e. in the form of questionnaires to assess the opinions of GPs, GP trainees, medical students, radiologists/ sonographers and commissioners.

The second part was the structured interviews conducted with providers of equipment and an academic at a medical school.

The final component was the unstructured interviews/discussions with members of the focus group.

**RESULTS**

The enthusiasm of the **GPs, trainees and students** was evident from the findings of the survey (43% positive - 25 respondents).

The **commissioners** (50% positive - 2 respondents) would have to be persuaded to view GP USS as a worthwhile investment on the evidence of fewer cases referred to hospital for USS and fewer patients attending A&E.

The **career sonographers**, in particular the latter (33% positive - 6 respondents), would require considerable persuasion in order to convince them of the non-threatening nature of GP USS.

The **providers of equipment** (100% positive - 3 respondents) showed considerable interest in the undertaking.

**CONCLUSION**

The introduction of GP USS would require a change in culture, a veritable paradigm shift, but it can be hoped that on the evidence presented such a change is not only possible, but desirable, if not inevitable.