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ASA POSITION STATEMENT | Non-Medical Ultrasound in Pregnancy

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Background

The purpose of this statement is to clarify the ASA's position on the non-medical use of ultrasound in pregnancy and to promote safe, evidence-based diagnostic practice by qualified professionals.

This position statement has been prepared by the Australasian Sonographers Association (ASA) in response to reports and consumer complaints of private businesses offering non-medical ultrasound scans to pregnant persons, advertised as offering peace of mind elective 'reassurance' scans, bonding or keepsake images including 3 or 4 dimensional pictures and videos, or to reveal the sex of the baby.

These scans may take place outside of recognised healthcare frameworks. They may lack vital patient safety and quality mechanisms and may mislead consumers.

The ASA holds significant concern about scans that take place outside of recognised healthcare frameworks and lack safety and quality mechanisms, because of the potential for:

- the use of operators who do not have appropriate training or accreditation
- the absence of appropriate medical oversight
- the absence of clinical reporting and pathways for pregnancy care and management
- a lack of informed consent regarding the risks and limitations of the scan(s)
- advertising that may mislead consumers about the purpose of the scan
- advertising that may cause consumers to use the information to guide their care in pregnancy.

Professional indemnity insurance is a fundamental requirement for all health professionals. The ASA holds concerns about any members who choose to undertake non-medical scans without appropriate insurance arrangements in place.

Position

- The ASA does not endorse obstetric ultrasound scans performed solely for the purpose of keepsake imaging, elective 'reassurance' scans, or scans to determine the sex of the baby without a medical referral or clinical reason. These scans are considered non-medical and non-diagnostic.
- All ultrasound examinations in pregnancy should be undertaken by health professionals qualified and skilled in diagnostic ultrasound, such as Accredited Medical Sonographers, who are able to accurately interpret ultrasound imaging and operate equipment safely with adherence to the ALARA (As Low As Reasonably Achievable) principle.
- To uphold vital national patient safety and quality standards*, all publicly funded obstetric ultrasound examinations (including those that are Medicare-rebatable in Australia) require a valid medical referral/request from an eligible health professional, a clinical report, informed patient consent, and appropriate medical oversight.
- Non-medical exams may not follow clinical guidelines or examine and document all the required structures to confirm the ongoing health of a pregnancy. They are not appropriate for informing pregnancy care and management and should not replace routine medical prenatal ultrasound exams. Non-medical obstetric scans can present potential risks such as misinterpretation of ultrasound findings, false reassurances, and inappropriate or delayed care.
- Non-medical ultrasound occurring outside of recognised healthcare frameworks undermines public confidence in legitimate, accredited diagnostic services and may expose vulnerable consumers to misinformation and delayed care.
- Any patient that is unsure or concerned about if or when an ultrasound is needed, should seek advice from a medical practitioner.

A note on Professional Indemnity Insurance

- ASA professional indemnity insurance provides coverage to sonographers working within the sonography scope of practice performing diagnostic ultrasound examinations.
- The ASA Sonography Scope of Practice [2025], states that “Accredited medical sonographers are healthcare professionals qualified to perform and document diagnostic ultrasound examinations using specialist equipment. Their clinical expertise and reasoning contribute to diagnostic decision making, supporting patient care and management across a range of clinical settings.”
- Sonographers who choose to undertake non-medical scans should ensure they have appropriate indemnity insurance arrangements in place as the indemnity insurance offered through ASA covers medical diagnostic scans only.
- Full details, terms and conditions, of the ASA’s group profession insurance policy can be found on the ASA website: www.sonographers.org/membership/Membership-Insurance

* In Australia, this includes the National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards, and the Diagnostic Imaging Accreditation Scheme (DIAS) standards which is scheduled to be replaced by the National Safety and Quality Medical Imaging (NSQMI) Standards. In New Zealand, this includes the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers’ Rights, along with the requirements set out in the New Zealand Code of Radiology Management Practice (NZCRMP) and the International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) Medical Imaging Services Accreditation scheme.

Acknowledgements

ASA Sonographer Policy and Advisory Committee (SPAC)

ASA NZ Sonographer Policy and Advisory Group

ASA Women’s Health Special Interest Group

Document governance

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