

December 2nd, 2020

Dear ACGME Emergency Medicine Milestones Work Group:

The leaders of the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine and the Academy of Emergency Ultrasound write this letter to express concern for the omission of the ultrasound subcompetency (previously PC12) proposed in the ACGME Emergency Medicine Milestones 2.0, as well as a general lack of attention to point-of-care ultrasound (POCUS) throughout the document and Supplemental Guide.

We are writing to advocate for the visible inclusion of POCUS within the EM Milestones 2.0, in a manner that reflects current training and practice. This would form the strongest standard for graduated competency-based resident evaluation in POCUS.

We are grateful that the original Milestones encouraged departments to provide resources that helped establish emergency ultrasound programs. However, there is still wide variation in the POCUS proficiency of EM residency graduates. Without explicit insertion of POCUS within the Milestones 2.0, there will be significant downstream consequences to POCUS education and subsequently to the provision of value-based, high-quality patient care.

The mastery of POCUS includes the psychomotor skill of image acquisition and procedural guidance, in addition to medical knowledge, image interpretation, and integration into clinical management. The ACGME Review Committee for Emergency Medicine Defined Key Index Procedure Minimums of 150 ultrasound scans does not recognize that POCUS relies upon competency-based assessment of multiple skillsets which extend beyond a single number of scans. This sets POCUS apart from the other procedures which were removed from the Milestones 2.0. In fact, POCUS cannot be considered solely a procedure as it is also a diagnostic modality, with training, administration and information technology requirements that expand beyond residency training into fellowship. While national standards are being established for EM ultrasound fellowships through the Focused Practice Designation from the American Board of Emergency Medicine, the incorporation of POCUS within the Milestones are a critical corollary for Emergency Medicine residencies.

Removing ultrasound as a subcompetency from the Milestones is being proposed at a time when increased standards are actually needed to address training gaps across EM residencies. Beyond the impact on emergency medicine education, there may be detrimental effects to the provision of multidisciplinary patient care.

We believe that the allocation of resources to implement and sustain resident POCUS education would be compromised, including support for personnel with dedicated expertise to deliver extensive hands-on teaching sessions, didactics, workshops, research, and quality improvement. Without inclusion in Milestones 2.0, this could significantly affect younger or smaller programs most, furthering educational inequality between large, well-funded academic centers and resource-poor residencies.

Ideally, we ask that the ACGME include an ultrasound-specific subcompetency in Milestones 2.0. We recognize this may not be entirely feasible within the framework of the revision guidelines. Therefore, we strongly recommend that ultrasound be explicitly worded into the milestones of the Patient Care 1 (Emergency Stabilization), Patient Care 3 (Diagnostic Imaging) and Patient Care 8 (General Approach to Procedures) subcompetencies, and that their accompanying Supplemental Guide examples be expanded to reflect the breadth of POCUS use within emergency medicine. We also request that ultrasound be omitted from the Patient Care 2 (Performance of Focused History and Physical Exam) subcompetency, as neither ultrasound nor POCUS receive accurate description in the example provided.

Please see the attached supplement to this letter for Proposed EM Milestone 2.0 suggestions. The Milestones are a foundation for educators, and deliberate inclusion of ultrasound-specific Milestones are crucial to Emergency Ultrasound and Emergency Medicine residency training.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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