

Letter to the Editor

*Corresponding author

Bruno M. Pereira, MD, MHSc, PhD, FACS, FCCM
Associate Professor
Trauma Surgery & Surgical Critical Care
University of Campinas
Campinas - SP, 13083-970, Brazil
E-mail: bpererira@unicamp.br

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Current Specialist Awareness on Ultrasound Use for Central Venous Catheterization

Bruno M. Pereira, MD, MHSc, PhD, FACS, FCCM¹; Alcir E. Dorigatti, MD²

¹Trauma Surgery Division, Department of Surgery, University of Campinas, Campinas - SP, 13083-970, Brazil

²Resident of Surgery, Department of Surgery, University of Campinas, Campinas, SP, Brazil

Obtaining central venous access is a fundamental clinical skill for managing patients in a wide variety of clinical situations. The role of routine portable Ultrasound (US) in the placement of Central Venous Catheters (CVCs) has been debated and some important evidence-based guidelines supporting the liberal use of ultrasound for this specific procedure have been published.¹⁻³ The use of ultrasound to help on central venous catheterization has shown to improve success rates with reduced complications, however the ultrasound has not been adopted worldwide for this specific end. Also, specialists' response to new publications on this subject is unknown. It is our feeling that, although many manuscripts have already proven that the US is safe and effective, its use is not routinely observed in a daily practice.

With this observation made, a question to validate this affirmative has blossomed and these authors decided to post it on a scientific social network, so we could be able to investigate current opinion and awareness from worldwide physicians from different specialties on ultrasound use for central venous catheterization. Throughout a specific scientific social network (researchgate.net) composed by 9 million members up-to-date from different professional areas including medicine, the question: "Is ultrasound an essential tool for placing central venous lines?" was raised. One of the website tools is a section where members perform questions and get answers on specific subject from different worldwide scientists. After 500 days online, answers were no longer accepted and the question placed offline for analysis. The following variables were analyzed: number of answers, number of countries answering the question, number of institutions involved on the query, quality of responders (based on published articles/citations and impact factors), specialties and opinions.

Two-hundred and twenty-four answers were registered. Three answers were excluded: two from registered nurses and one from a veterinarian. In total, 221 physician's answers were analyzed. Thirty-six countries and 114 different institutions participated answering the proposed question as represented in Table 1. All responders were analyzed regarding their academic activity. A mean of 21.5 articles published (average of 28.39 impact factor) were related to responders (SD±37.4) with 85.5(SD±427.62) average of citations.

Regarding all specialties 61.66% were anesthesiologists, 10% ER physicians, 7.5% surgeons, 5.83% critical care specialists, 5% pediatricians, 3% GI specialists and the remaining neonatologists, cardiologists, hematologists, radiologists, orthopedics and general practitioners summed 4.98% all together.

In regards to the specific question "Is ultrasound an essential tool for placing central venous lines?" an average of 54% of responders answered yes (46% otherwise). Among the top five specialties that more participated on this research, ER physicians and pediatricians are those that most likely believe that the ultrasound is an essential tool for placing CVCs (50%), followed by surgeons (44.4%), critical care specialists (42.85%) and anesthesiologists (41.89%).

Country	Institution	Country	Institution		
Argentina	Hospital Durand	Iran	Tehran University of Medical Sciences Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences		
Australia	University of Sydney		Japan	Japan Community Health Care Organization	
	University of New South Wales		Jordan	King Hussein Medical Center	
	St John of God Healthcare		Morocco	Université Ibn Tofail	
	Royal Flying Doctor Services	Nigeria	University of Ibadan		
Brazil	University of Campinas	Netherlands	Academisch Medisch Centrum Universiteit van Amsterdam University of Groningen Radboud University Nijmegen		
Canada	University of Ottawa		Pakistan	Hamdard University	
	SickKids - Toronto			Peru	Hospital Regional Docente de Trujillo
China	Jinhua Municipal Central Hospital		Poland	Children's Memorial Health Institute	
	Chinese University of Hong Kong	Portugal	Coimbra University Hospital Center		
	Croacia	University Clinical Hospital Center	Qatar	Hamad Medical Corporation	
		Klinički bolnički centar Rijeka	Romania	Universitatea de Medicina si Farmacie Grigore T. P. Institutul Clinic Fundeni	
Varazdin General Hospital		Saudi Arabia		Prince Sultan Military Medical City King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center	
University Hospital Centre Zagreb				Singapore	National University Health System
Czech Republic	Charles University of Prague			Spain	Hospital Universitario La Paz Onkologikoa Hospital Universitario Miguel Servet Hospital Universitari i Politècnic la Fe University of Valencia
	Denmark		Aarhus University Hospital		Sweeden
	Egypt	Zagazig University	Turkey		Gulhane Military Medical Academy Haseki Training and Research Hospital Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi Anadolu Medical Center
	France	Hôpital Universitaire Necker			United Arab Emirates
Centre Hospitalier de Saint-Quentin		United States of America	Washington University in St. Louis University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Medical College of Wisconsin Tampa General Hospital University of California University of Texas Health Science Center Vail Valley Medical Center Greater Baltimores Medical Center Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research University of Nebraska Medical Center Hartford Hospital University of South Carolina Loyola University Medical Center University of Pittsburgh Wayne State University		
Clinique Du Parc Saint Lazar			Germany	Elisabeth-Krankenhaus University of Cologne Herz- und Diabeteszentrum Nordrhein-Westfalen	
Clinique Saint Augustin				Greece	
Institut de Radiologie de Neuchâtel	Hungary				Kaposi Mór Oktató Kórház
Clinique Hospitalier de Fontainebleau		India			All India Institute of Medical Sciences Rishkesh Madras Institute of Orthopaedics and Traumatology Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences Institute of Medical Sciences Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences Global Hospital Columbia Asia Hospital - Mysore Reliance Industries Limited B. J. Medical College Kingsway Healthcare AIIMS Bhopal All India Institute of Medical Sciences Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences Pondicherry Institute of Medical Sciences Lady Hardinge Medical College

Italy	CTO Torino (Italy) Trauma Center Hospital of Imola Azienda Ospedaliera Santa Maria della Misericordia Azienda Ospedaliero-Universitaria Pisana Azienda USL Valle d'Aosta Ospedale San Pietro Fatebenefratelli Azienda Ospedaliera Papa Giovanni XXIII Azienda Ospedaliero Universitaria Careggi AORN Ospedali dei Colli University Hospital of Parma	United Kingdom	University of Manchester Southern Health and Social Care Trust NHS Lanarkshire National Health Service Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Zayed Military Hospital Imperial College Healthcare NHS Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust Belfast Health and Social Care Trust University of Dundee
Israel	Hillel Yaffe Medical Center		

Table1: Countries and institutions involved on debating the subject.

Ten responder opinions were relevant to mention, as follows:

- 1) Ultrasound is the gold standard for the placement of CVCs - 56.34%;
- 2) US device for CVC placement should be preferred if US is available - 53.17%;
- 3) Physicians should be trained in both anatomic landmark technique (AL) and US technique (US) - 46.82%;
- 4) Residents must be taught into both techniques AL and US -44.44%;
- 5) US use should be mandatory - 42.85%;
- 6) US technique is difficult to use on subclavian vein - 11.9%;
- 7) Physicians should be free to use whatever technique he/she thinks is better for their patients - 11.11%;
- 8) Physicians should learn first anatomic landmark technique before start handling the US for this matter - 10.31%;
- 9) The US learning curve is long - 4.76%;
- 10) Physicians used to anatomic landmark technique have trouble to learn the US technique - 1.58%;

This brief opinion report brings to light whether specialists are aware of the use of ultrasound on placing CVCs. Many studies were published reinforcing the use of ultrasound for this purpose proving to be safe and effective. Even though there are a number of recent papers stressing the use of ultrasound as an essential tool in placing CVCs, this device is not available at all institutions and it is not currently the standard of care worldwide.

The question on how physicians from different specialties worldwide are aware about using the ultrasound for this specific purpose have aroused, creating an interesting field of investigation on current opinion of specialists on this specific matter. One important need for these authors was to determine whether or not the responders group are involved in academic activities. The meaning of this is that if the majority of responders are really involved in academic activities, doing research and

publishing, then we were probably dealing with a very special high-level group of specialists. This is the reason why we also searched on responders' publications, impact factor of publications and citations. To the end of this very first section of the study we realized that we were dealing with a strong group of specialists involved with many publications of good power. An average of 21.5 manuscripts were related to each responder with an impact factor average of 28.39 confirming that our group of responders are all involved in academics and indeed are experts on the subject. Fifty-four percent of specialists believe that the ultrasound is an essential tool for placing central venous lines. Fifty percent of emergency physicians and pediatricians were skeptical in affirm that the ultrasound is essential for the procedure in question. Not too far from this number were surgeons, intensivists and anesthesiologists, dividing the population of specialists on the opinion that ultrasound is or is not an essential tool for obtaining central lines. The point that these two authors were not able to clarify is why specialists are divided on the use of ultrasound for this purpose, even though literature enforces safety and efficacy with fewer complications with the use of this modern point-of-care device?

Following this rationale, only 56% of responders expressed that the use of ultrasound for determining a CVC is the standard-of-care. In the same way, only 53.7% affirm that ultrasound should be preferred when available. In a time of evidence-based medicine shouldn't we expect a higher number of physicians defending the use of ultrasound?³⁻⁵ Maybe, because of ultrasound for determining CVC and ultrasound point-of-care is something relatively new in medicine, adoption for this new technique including its learning curve and training would be a hassle for experienced physicians to shift from one technique to another. The answer is no. Based on this research only 1.58% expressed in the discussion that learning another technique would be an issue. 10.31% of physicians expressed that should learn first anatomic landmark technique before start handling the US for this matter. In the other hand, around 90% of this selective group of responders do not agree that a physician should use whatever technique he or she thinks is the best for their patients,

suggesting that a protocol must be followed. In order to that, some training must happen in any stage of medical career but only 44.44% of these opinion leaders defended in the discussion that residents must be taught into both techniques. Many questions and debates are arising on literature regarding training for central venous line access and learning both techniques during residency looks reasonable, in contrast to specialists' position on this research where 66% of responders did not expressed any argument for residents training in both techniques. Our opinion is that both residents and physicians must be prepared for the use of ultrasound or not depending on the situation or where he is working. In a critical scenario the quick use of the ultrasound may be difficult due to patient's severity and anatomic landmark should be stimulated. By the other hand, ultrasound should be the first option when available, in agreement with responders (58%) that stated that ultrasonography should not be mandatory. A physician should have adequate proficiency in the landmark technique as in the ultrasound technique but the evidence favors for the ultrasound technique. The fact that a certain percentage of people agreed with the same opinion does not mean that the others disagree with them; therefore, this dataset could estimate the real opinion from responders but was not precise about it.

With this brief opinion report it is clear to us that in a time of evidence-based medicine there are still some controversies that need to be addressed regarding the use of ultrasound for placing CVCs, including a uniform opinion on training, protocols and finally broad use of a proven benefic device. The pros and cons on using or not the ultrasound for the subject herein discussed maybe never end; however, there are so strong evidences that support its use in order to avoid not only mechanical complications but infectious complications and thrombosis that the use of US seems in fact the best option.

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