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Ultrasound as a teaching tool in anatomy classes in an integrated medical curriculum

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**Ultrasound as a teaching tool in anatomy classes in an integrated medical curriculum.**

Ultrasound is becoming increasingly accessible and cost effective as a “point-of-care” diagnostic tool in medical practice worldwide, particularly with the advent of hand-held scanners and their potential for routine use in clinical examination. Consequently, a minimum skill level in ultrasonography will soon be essential to produce competitive and competent medical graduates, and incorporation of ultrasound training in medical curricula is timely. Our graduate-entry MBBS degree utilizes an integrated, spiral curriculum. We have designed an ultrasound curriculum to be delivered over the duration of this course, complementing: anatomy and physiology in Phase 1; clinical examination in Phase 2; rural clinical placement in Phase 3; and hospital emergency assessment in Phase 4. To complement anatomy teaching in Phase 1, we established an ultrasound curriculum comprising a series of online modules covering ultrasound principles, a demonstration on body cavities and fluid, and practical scanning activities guided by a Sonographer in the relevant body system blocks. In these classes, we include a clinical scenario and combine ultrasound and anatomy of: the abdominal aorta, popliteal vessels, pancreas, spleen, liver, gallbladder, kidneys and bladder. Introducing our medical students to ultrasound principles and techniques during Phase 1 allows the students to apply the anatomy content in a clinical context, and gives the teaching significance and relevance, all important pedagogical principles that enhance anatomy learning and teaching. Further, acquiring some initial experience and confidence in ultrasound provides a base upon which further practice and skills can be obtained during their later longitudinal clinical placements.