

Calling ALL Sonographer Programs

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Provide the education for Advanced Sonography

Do you want to become an Advanced Cardiovascular Sonographer? Thanks to ASE's continued active support, a new profession, the Advanced Cardiovascular Sonographer (ACS), is officially recognized by the Commission on the Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP). Additionally, CAAHEP approved specific educational curriculum associated with this advanced profession, and ALL cardiovascular sonography programs are encouraged to add it to their programs for both diversity and for the professional growth and development of the field of cardiovascular sonography.

// WHAT IS AN ADVANCED CARDIOVASCULAR SONOGRAPHER (ACS)?

The Advanced Cardiovascular Sonographer (ACS) career track goes beyond technical performance and minimum criteria of achieving a credential (RDCS or RCS) and includes advanced educational content with an internship with a physician that is similar to a medical fellowship program. An ACS has skills similar to those held by sonographers working across the country who currently have the job description "ultrasound practitioner" or "advanced cardiac sonographer." The ACS-level sonographer will typically be more involved in the review of studies performed by staff sonographers, while serving as a resource for difficult, congenital or advanced interrogation. Other duties may include teaching, research, or technology implementation and/or education. Importantly, this position is not meant to replace physicians by providing interpretive reports or to compete with physicians for reimbursement of services. Rather, Advanced Cardiovascular Sonographers complement physicians and make physician services more efficient.

// HOW WILL THE NEW CURRICULUM DIFFER FROM EXISTING PROGRAMS?

The educational curriculum accredited through CAAHEP standardizes the educational background and requirements. <http://www.caahep.org/documents/file/COA/ACS/CoA-ACSStandardsFinal2012.pdf>. While current CVT and DMS educational programs teach students to perform echocardiograms at the entry level, the ACS is an advanced educational and clinical pathway, thereby providing the field of cardiovascular sonographers a clinical ladder with vertical progression. Depending on the resources of the programs providing the education, the coursework could be in a variety of formats, including an online platform.

As schools begin obtaining accreditation for this educational curriculum, the CAAHEP will post contact information for them at www.caahep.org/Find-An-Accredited-Program/

// A NEW LEVEL OF EXCELLENCE FOR SCHOOLS, SONOGRAPHERS AND PATIENTS

It's an exciting time for our profession, as schools will now be able to provide an accredited program for the advanced level (which could include a master's degree) and students will now have a formal source for education to advance their practice to a higher level. We look forward to an advanced credential and recognition for those sonographers who provide enhanced patient care in a variety of clinical settings.

For information on the Guidelines and Standards for Advanced Cardiovascular Sonography and the CoA-ACS Board, please visit www.coaacs.org. A more detailed description of the role and education of an Advanced Cardiovascular Sonographer are outlined in a white paper published in the December 2009 issues of JASE. http://www.caahep.org/documents/file/COA/ACS/Advanced%20Cardiovascular%20Sonographer%20JASE%20Article%20Dec_%202009.pdf

Programs interested in applying to offer programmatic education for the ACS should contact CoA-ACS headquarters at 919.465.9020 or www.coaacs.org to obtain a copy of the Self-Study for Initial Accreditation.