

Ultrasonography for Nephrologists

W. Charles O'Neill, M.D.

*Professor of Medicine and Physiology, Director, Renal Ultrasonography Renal Division,
Emory University, Atlanta, GA, USA*

Nephrologists rely heavily on sonography to evaluate kidney structure. Sonography is critical in the work up of chronic kidney disease and is also useful in the evaluation of acute renal failure, pain, and hematuria, and it is integral in the care of patients with renal transplants. In addition to hydronephrosis, sonography can detect cysts, stones, solid masses, and parenchymal disease, and is the method of choice for guiding renal biopsy and for measuring bladder volume. A major advantage is its safety, availability, portability, and low cost, but the quality of the studies is very dependent on the skill of the operator. Sonography is ideally suited for incorporation into the practice of nephrology. The equipment is small and inexpensive, and performance and interpretation are not difficult to learn. Since proper interpretation usually requires clinical correlation, nephrologists are ideally suited for this procedure.

Experience in the United States has shown that sonography performed by nephrologists expedites and enhances patient care and improves physician efficiency. With proper training, nephrologists can readily acquire the skills necessary to scan kidneys and interpret the images, and to guide percutaneous biopsies. To ensure proper training and skill, the American Society for Diagnostic and Interventional Nephrology has established a program for certification of nephrologists and accreditation of training programs in sonography. This presentation will provide background information on renal sonography and how nephrologists can incorporate it into their practice. This will include discussion of equipment, uses, interpretation, and a live demonstration. Information on training opportunities will be provided and there will be an opportunity to perform a renal sonogram at a separate "hands-on" workshop at this conference.