FOI 1893

Date 07/06/2023

Dear Requester,

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request. Please note, this is a cross-site response for Bedford site and Luton site.

You asked:

1. For what symptoms would a transvaginal ultrasound be indicated?-

Transvaginal ultrasound (TVUS) is considered the first line diagnostic assessment tool for the uterus and ovaries. Indications would include menstrual disturbances, subfertility, pelvic pain.

1. Are there any groups of people a transvaginal ultrasound would not be carried out on? If so, why would they not be indicated?

Transvaginal ultrasound is an intimate examination and is only performed after informed verbal consent from the patient. Therefore any patient who declines a transvaginal examination or lacks capacity to consent would not have a TVUS. A patient under 16 would not be offered a TVUS either. Previously, we did not offer TVUS to virgo intacta patients, however the recent BMUS guidelines released in October 2022 now indicate that TVUS should be offered to all patients over the age of 16 years after informed consent. We are in the process of revising our regional guidelines to that effect.

1. Does trust policy indicate that it is allowed to carry out transvaginal ultrasounds on those who have never been sexually active before? If it is not allowed, what is the reasoning behind no sexual contact being a contraindication for these scans?

We would perform TVUS is patients who have not been sexually active if they have had previous internal examinations/ cervical smears and are willing to undergo TVUS.  Virgo intacta was previously considered a contra-indication because they may experience higher levels of discomfort or pain and may be more at risk of infection. Whilst an internal examination of these patients in a fully equipped Gynae outpatient clinic would be easier, carrying out a transvaginal procedure in a Radiology clinic- sometimes out of hours in late lists, would be more difficult. The current BMUS guideline also highlights this fact (point 4.1) and urges the need for documentation and fully informed consent.

1. If transvaginal ultrasounds are not allowed in your trust for the 'sexually inactive', what is the justification for this going against the British Medical Ultrasound Society’s guidelines, which state: “The concept of virginity plays no part in the clinical decision making for a TVUS” and “if a patient has not had penetrative sex, they are still entitled to be offered, and to accept, a TVUS [transvaginal ultrasound] in the same way that cervical screening is offered to all eligible patients"? ([https://www.bmus.org/static/uploads/resources/Transvaginal\_Ultrasound\_Guidance\_Final\_With\_Front\_Cover\_MesUP8a.pdf](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.bmus.org%2Fstatic%2Fuploads%2Fresources%2FTransvaginal_Ultrasound_Guidance_Final_With_Front_Cover_MesUP8a.pdf&data=05%7C01%7Cbhn-tr.foibedfordshirehospitals%40nhs.net%7C652a937b20f4454fb30108dafd64d494%7C37c354b285b047f5b22207b48d774ee3%7C0%7C1%7C638100906747802459%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=hHm0XMyLEG0wktlvZCT0ZiFc5C5X9KPdmnGyeGjjcUw%3D&reserved=0))

The BMUS guidelines were only released in October 2022 (two months ago) and we are in the process of incorporating these into our local guidelines ASAP. We were hoping to review a few other segments in our local guidelines at the same time before we release our new and improved guidelines, hopefully by next month.

1. What does the Trust define as ‘sexual activity’?

We define penetrative sex as “sexual activity” for the purpose of TVUS.

1. Which members of staff in your trust perform transvaginal ultrasounds?

Only trained sonographers and trained Radiologists would perform transvaginal ultrasound.  Students may perform scans under direct supervision of qualified staff.

1. Have all of those staff members received diversity and inclusion training regarding their patient-facing roles? If so, please detail the nature of the course or programme and number of hours completed.

The Trust requires all staff to complete mandatory training with regular updates. One of the mandatory courses is “Equality and Diversity”. This is a nationally approved course provided by “e-learning for health” and is used by Trusts across the UK.

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Yours sincerely,

*FOI Officer*

Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust