

Doctors Turning to Contrast Enhanced Ultrasound for Superior Results; Reimbursement Is Also Favorable.

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CHICAGO--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Doctors are finding that contrast enhanced ultrasound (CEUS) is so effective in imaging kidney masses in patients with polycystic kidney disease that “they go right to CEUS and no longer bother with CT,” Dr. Richard Barr said Friday at the annual Advances in Contrast Ultrasound conference in Chicago.

Dr. Barr, a radiologist in Youngstown, Ohio and an officer of the International Contrast Ultrasound Society (ICUS), said that his colleagues, including nephrologists, often favor CEUS because it quickly produces accurate and reliable results without the high cost, risk of kidney damage and exposure to radiation associated with contrast CT or MR.

And CEUS is not just good for patients, according to Barr.

“Many doctors don’t realize that they get paid more for using CEUS when compared to CT or MR with contrast, and reimbursement is available no matter what organ you are examining and no matter which ultrasound contrast agent you use,” Barr said.

CEUS, along with grayscale ultrasound, have “a critical role to play” in detecting solid renal masses, according to a report presented by ICUS Board Member Christine Merrill, a sonographer in the Department of Radiology at the University of Calgary.

She reviewed the recent case of a 70-year old patient with adult polycystic kidney disease initially examined with CT, which identified a single suspect mass in the right kidney. The patient was then referred for CEUS, which found 5 solid masses across both kidneys.

Ultrasound contrast agents are biocompatible suspensions of echogenic microbubbles that are injected intravenously during an ultrasound exam to help identify tumors and other abnormalities of the kidneys, liver, bowel, heart and other organ systems.

Ultrasound contrast agents are sold by Bracco, GE Healthcare and Lantheus.