

Sonographers may use ultrasound enhancing agents to improve echocardiograms and reduce health care costs, expert says.

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CHICAGO--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Sonographers trained in administering ultrasound enhancing agents (UEAs) can help improve patient care while also reducing health care costs, a Harvard cardiologist said Thursday at the annual Advances in Contrast Ultrasound conference in Chicago.

“UEAs can significantly improve the accuracy and reliability of a standard echocardiogram performed to evaluate heart disease,” said Dr. Jordan Strom, Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, Director of the Echocardiography Laboratory at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and a member of the Board of Directors of the International Contrast Ultrasound Society (ICUS).

“Getting the right diagnosis upfront can reduce costly downstream testing, and when UEAs are used efficiently hospitals will save money. With every 10 minutes shaved off the time it takes to administer the scans, there are significant cost savings,” Dr. Strom added.

He also suggested storing UEAs in the echocardiography laboratory.

Trained sonographers are permitted to determine whether a UEA should be used, place an IV and administer UEAs pursuant to the updated sonographer scope of practice published last March by the Society of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers.

UEAs are used worldwide to enhance ultrasound scans of the heart (known as echocardiograms) and other organ systems and tumors throughout the body. UEAs do not contain dye and create no known risk of kidney damage. In addition, enhanced ultrasound scans are significantly less expensive than CT or MRI, and do not expose patients or hospital staff to ionizing radiation.

“Delays in IV placement may undermine medically appropriate UEA use and jeopardize the quality and diagnostic certainty of the echocardiogram,” Dr. Strom said.