

Contamination of Point-of-Care Ultrasound Transducers Alarms Key Clinician

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Using ultrasound transducers is often necessary in the emergency department, but too often the proper procedures to protect against health care associated infections are not followed, and clinicians are worried.



Ultrasound transducer with barrier dressing (Image courtesy PICC Excellence, Hartwell, GA).

Inconsistency in ultrasound transducers leads to health care-associated infections (HAIs), and many HAIs are because the health care workers are not following strict protocol of using probes that are covered, proper thorough disinfection of surfaces, and using demonstrated safe decontamination procedures.

Infection Control Today® (*ICT*®) spoke with Nancy Moureau, RN, PhD, CRNI, CPUI, VA-BC, expert in the field of vascular access practice, owner and CEO of PICC Excellence, and a member of *ICT*®'s editorial board about concerns of contamination and what can—and does—happen when the proper procedures are not followed. Finally, Moureau covers what it means when a health care worker says he or she does not have time to do proper hand hygiene.

This is the first of a 4-part series.

***Infection Control Today*® (*ICT*®): What are the principal contamination concerns associated with transducers used in point-of-care ultrasound procedures?**

NM: Basically, our concerns associated with ultrasound and the types of transducers used for percutaneous procedures go along the lines of blood exposure and exposure to other types of bacteria that can be transmitted from patient to patient. We have contamination concerns when naked probes or naked transducers are used, and there's no disinfection of the surfaces before and after, which is the standard recommendation.

Contamination of transducers occurs through skin contact, through contact with unsterile or contaminated gloves, or through contact with hands that are not covered by gloves. We also have environmental contaminants where the transducer may be sitting in the air and have contaminants that attach to the surface. There are a number of contamination concerns associated with transducers that require us to have very consistent use of disinfection before and after a procedure.

***ICT*®:** Those procedures are required, and if they're not performed correctly, health care-associated infections (HAIs) and other situations can arise.