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Feasibility and results of abdominal ultrasound in primary care

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Background and Aim: Abdominal ultrasound is a diagnostic tool used frequently in general practice. The aim was to study the results and feasibility of abdominal ultrasound in Primary Care.

Method: Cross-sectional study was performed in a urban health centre. 200 patients were included over a period of 23 months. Ultrasounds were performed by a general practitioner after an specific training. The protocol included the following variables: age, gender, reason for request (laboratory abnormalities, known pathologies' follow up, diagnosis of new pathology, and other reasons), and ultrasound diagnosis. Proportions were compared using Chi-square test and the mean with t-test.

Results: The mean age was 56.3 years (SD 17.1), 58.5% were women. The most frequent reasons for the request were: diagnosis of new pathology (49.5%) laboratory abnormalities (26.2%) and known pathologies' follow up (22.5%). The most prevalent results were: normal ultrasound (41%), fatty liver (15.5%), gallstones (11.5%), renal cysts (9.5%) and renal stones (8%). When new pathology was suspected the most common diagnoses were: normal ultrasound (53.5%), gallstones (13.1%), renal stones (8.1%), and renal cysts (7.1%). In the case of laboratory abnormalities the results were: fatty liver (37.7%), normal ultrasound (43.4%), gallstones (5.7%), renal cysts (3.8%), and bile polyps (3.8%). When known pathologies were controlled: renal cysts (22.2%), renal stones (15.6%), gallstones (15.6%), fatty liver (15.6%), and liver cysts (13.3%). Pathologic ultrasound was more common in men than women (72% versus 49.1%, $p = 0.001$), without relation other variables.

Conclusions: Abdominal ultrasound in Primary Care is feasible, allows the follow up of known pathologies, and permits the diagnosis of new diseases.