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EXCELA HEALTH EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS
LEADING THE WAY IN POINT-OF-CARE ULTRASOUND

LATROBE, PA, June 1, 2016…Excela Health Emergency Departments are among the first in the nation and the front runners in Pennsylvania achieving accreditation for Point-of-Care (POC) ultrasound from The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP).

Recognition in ACEP’s Clinical Ultrasound Accreditation Program (CUAP) came within months of the accreditation’s debut in June 2015, but was based on years of competency development within the Excela Health Emergency Departments and support from Excela’s charitable foundations and radiologists.

Excela Latrobe Hospital was the 12th hospital nationwide, and the first hospital in Pennsylvania of any size to earn accreditation in February, with Frick and Westmoreland hospitals following shortly thereafter. Across the country, only 21 hospitals have achieved accreditation thus far and most are associated with academic programs.

Dr. Charles Amadee, current Emergency Department Ultrasound Director and member of Westmoreland Emergency Medicine Specialists (WEMS), the physician group that provides emergency services to Excela
Health, was instrumental in advancing certification eligibility by validating the expertise of the WEMS physicians, and refining necessary policies and procedures.

WEMS physicians have been utilizing this new capability increasingly since their ultrasound program was established by Dr. Lisa Barr in 2007 with equipment purchased through generous grants from the Latrobe Area Hospital Charitable Foundation and the Westmoreland/Frick Foundation. Currently there are 22 WEMS physicians credentialed to perform at least one of 10 different emergency ultrasound applications. These include the rapid identification of serious conditions such as abdominal aortic aneurisms, internal bleeding, collapsed lungs, ectopic pregnancies, and swollen kidneys or gall bladder caused by stones. Credentialed WEMS physicians also utilize their ultrasound skills to safely guide the placement of central IV catheters, rapidly visualize cardiac function, and obtain many clues to help direct the initial care of patients who present with severe pain or shock from unknown causes.

Traditional ultrasound is usually a non-emergency procedure, involving comprehensive imaging studies done in the Radiology Department by a highly trained ultrasound technician using a non-portable machine. The images are then sent to a Radiologist for reading, where an official interpretation is prepared and transmitted to the provider who ordered the test.

In contrast, “point–of- care” (POC) ultrasounds are limited studies meant to answer very specific clinical questions. They are performed by ED physicians themselves using a portable machine moved to the patient’s bedside. The ED physician interprets his/ her own images and uses this
information to help diagnose and treat patients who are often critically ill, injured or unstable.

“POC ultrasound has now become mainstream in emergency medicine and the number of important uses for the care of our patients is rapidly expanding,” noted Dr. Amadee, who has been an emergency physician at Excela Latrobe Hospital for 27 years. “When the patient is too sick to wait for formal tests or scans, the immediate information provided by POC ultrasound can be life saving.”

Within the last decade, residency programs for emergency physicians began including training to perform bedside ultrasounds as a core competency, yet few graduating ED doctors are able to utilize this skill unless they choose to practice at an academic center. As Dr. Amadee explains, “Our program’s accreditation should help Excela recruit and retain the highest caliber, ultrasound oriented emergency physicians. It also demonstrates our department’s commitment to quality, which is in keeping with Excela Health’s commitment to the communities we serve.”

To achieve this accreditation, the emergency physicians at Excela Health had to provide extensive documentation of their training, quality assurance, and program structure. These were then critiqued by a national board of experts in emergency ultrasound. Accreditation by CUAP is granted only to programs that meet the high standards established by the American College of Emergency Physicians.

“By using POC ultrasound, we have saved lives, expedited patient care, enhanced patient safety, and increased patient satisfaction in our Emergency Departments,” added Dr. Amadee. “CUAP Accreditation should
convey to our patients, colleagues and potential future ED physicians that our program is first-rate and meets or exceeds the highest standards for care.”