

World Congress on Hypertension and Cardiovascular Diseases

November 21-22, 2018 | Paris, France

The clinical impact of echocardiography on patients in tertiary centers in South Africa

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According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA), cardiovascular diseases are one of the largest burdens to treat in South Africa. Heart disease and strokes are South Africa's biggest killers after HIV/AIDS. Every hour in South Africa five people have heart attack and 10 people have strokes. More South Africans die of coronary vascular diseases than all the cancers combined. The significant therapeutic impact of echocardiography has been accentuated over the last few years, especially in South Africa. Therefore, the demand for echocardiography has increased drastically. Echocardiography has been shown to have a positive impact on the management of critical patients and influences the clinical management of these patients. When echocardiography screening is implemented at an early stage then appropriate care can be given immediately and waiting times for referrals to tertiary care settings or specialists can be reduced. Echocardiography gives important anatomical and functional information about the heart. A study done at the University of Cape Town showed that 84% of patient management was impacted by echocardiography and 56% of the echocardiograms that confirmed the referring doctor's diagnosis still had a significant impact on the patient's clinical management. The significant changes in clinical management occurring as a result of echocardiography raises the question, what if this should not become a routine scan for most patients admitted with a history of cardiovascular disease. A large majority of tertiary centers in South Africa do not have access to echocardiography services. The lack of echocardiography training appears to be one of the main limitations of the rollout of this service to tertiary centers in South Africa. The demand to access this service and the need for training in echocardiography has been highlighted in previous studies. The significant impact that echocardiography may have on the management of patients in the general wards or ICU suggest that appropriate training in echocardiography should be incorporated into the curriculum of the MMed degree in all recognized specialties of Medicine in South Africa. These programs should be structured to meet the Health Professions Council of South Africa's requirements for specialization in this field.

Biography

Arné Husselmann has vast experience in Clinical Technology. She has completed her Bachelor's degree in Clinical Technology, specializing in Cardiology at the University of Technology located in the Free State, South Africa. She gained a great deal of exposure to diverse Pathologies in equally adult and Pediatric Cardiology. Following her graduation, she worked as Senior Cardiac Technologist in the Cardiology Department at Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town. She also worked at Christiaan Barnard Hospital as a Cardiac Technologist in Cape Town alongside some of South Africa's best Cardiologists where she then recognized her vision of commencing her own practice. She has presently established at Louis Leipoldt Medi-clinic that serves as the basis for the Mobile Echocardiogram Clinic that indicated excessive growth over the past two years. Her current work scope includes servicing Blaauwberg, Milnerton and Cape Town Med clinics. Her ability to manage a mobile clinic has vastly improved the report turnover time in the industry, she is ambitious to extend her services nationally by the end of 2018 that will give the Medical field an improvement with more sufficient service times and patient turnarounds.

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