
Effervescence in the field of Contrast Enhanced Ultrasound

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In 2004, EFSUMB (European Federation of Societies of Ultrasound in Medicine and Biology) issued the first guidelines for the use of contrast enhanced ultrasound (CEUS) agents. Four years later, in 2008, new guidelines were published, based on the latest information available.

For many years, Romanian specialists in the field of ultrasonography have fallen behind in this new mode of ultrasound evaluation, probably due to the lack of high performance ultrasound machines. In the last two years, promising perspectives have appeared in this field, due to the 'infusion of new, very powerful ultrasound devices, especially in the university centers, but also in private practices.

Last autumn (2008), Romanian ultrasound specialists participated in a Euroson School on CEUS held in Hanover (Director Prof. Hans Peter Weskott), during which they were introduced to the great benefits of this method.

In spring 2009, included in the National Conference of Ultrasound, a full day Euroson School on the use of CEUS was held. In this Euroson School, some of the best specialists in CEUS from Europe and Asia showed us the best practices of this method. More than 120 Romanian participants learned many theoretical and practical things about the "bubbles" and were offered excellent *tips* by experienced specialists.

At the end of August 2009, due to a questionnaire issued by Prof. Radu Badea in Cluj Napoca, we found that, at this moment, CEUS is performed in daily practice in 13 Romanian centers, in 60% of the cases by gastroenterologists, in 31% by radiologists and in 9% by other specialties. The vast majority of CEUS examinations are made for the evaluation of focal liver lesions, but other organs are covered as well.

Regarding the specialists' training in the field of CEUS, this autumn three very interesting courses have been offered by 3 university centers (in September in Timișoara, in October in Cluj Napoca and in November in Craiova). Following the course graduation, every ultrasonographer with II or III level of practice in the SRUMB (EFSUMB) classification, will be able to use CEUS in daily practice. These courses include "hands-on" sessions, demonstrating to the participants its great value.

This September, in Bologna, a very prestigious Euroson School on CEUS (Directors: Fabio Piscalia and Luigi Bolondi) took place. The best specialists in this field taught young doctors who have just started to use this method.

Also, some of the members of SRUMB (including myself) followed the recent development of this method in Sydney, at the World Congress of Ultrasound, at the end of August 2009. Furthermore, in December, at Euroson 2009 in Edinburgh, many of you will be able to see the best practice in CEUS.

Because of the great interest in Romania, we have decided to have next year, during the National Conference of Ultrasound in Sibiu, in May, a full day of CEUS, covering not only its use for liver diseases, but also the extrahepatic, "off-label" use of SonoVue.

From the viewpoint of medical costs, by using CEUS we can save money, many published articles proving that this method is less expensive than CT or MRI, especially for the evaluation of the liver, with similar performances.

Thus, I can conclude that in this moment we are facing a very good time for ultrasonography, where this new method has increased very much the accuracy of ultrasound and I has made it a very useful modality for patients' evaluation in daily medical practice.

Increasing the use of CEUS in Romania fits the current European trend, and Romania is now ahead of our neighboring countries regarding its use.