Reviewer's report

Title: Prehospital Ultrasound in North America: Current use and future possibilities

Version: 1 Date: 17 September 2013

Reviewer: James Tsung

Reviewer's report:

Thank you for the opportunity to review this manuscript. This is a survey of point-of-care ultrasound use in North American EMS systems. Point-of-care ultrasound is becoming an important tool and skillset for emergency and critical care providers. The topic is novel and is within the scope of this journal, BMC Emergency Medicine.

Minor Compulsory Revisions

Overall the paper is well written. The literature search is fairly complete. The methodology was appropriate and survey questionnaire was well organized and comprehensive.

Results section is well presented.

The first paragraph of the discussion can be expanded to explain why prehospital ultrasound is infrequently used in North America. Their key observation is that prehospital ultrasound use was associated with having physicians as the highest level of pre-hospital providers, which a small minority of EMS systems. The authors should note that EMS systems with a high level of the prehospital ultrasound use, as well as published literature, is coming from Europe, where physician staffing of EMS is standard. (Ma, Mateer, Blaivas 2nd Edition Emergency Ultrasound, Chapter 4 – Prehospital Ultrasound: Perspectives from Four Countries; Walcher F, Petrovic T, Neri L, and Heegaard W).

Aside from the issues of cost and training, without ultrasound-capable physicians in the field to demonstrate prehospital ultrasound to EMS providers, it dissemination and penetration will be challenging.

The limitations are appropriately stated—fairly low response rate being the biggest limitation, however the other possibility is that the nonresponders are probably not using ultrasound and did not bother to reply.

No other revisions suggested.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
No conflicts of interest