

## The Sonographer

### General Information

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### What is a Sonographer?

A sonographer is a health professional who uses *ultrasound* to produce images of your body in order to diagnose health problems.

### What does a Sonographer do?

A sonographer performs ultrasound examinations that use sound waves transmitted into the body through a hand-held device called a transducer. The sonographer is trained to produce images that will allow a medical diagnosis to be made.

The sonographer uses clinical, practical and interpretive skills to obtain high quality ultrasound images. A sonographer works closely with a radiologist to derive the most accurate diagnosis for a patient. The radiologist may need to attend the patient to clarify clinical findings or talk to the patient about their clinical symptoms in order to gain a full understanding of the medical significance of the ultrasound findings. It is the radiologist who is responsible for making the written report about the ultrasound examination.

### Why become a Sonographer?

A sonographer is ideally a person who enjoys clinical contact with patients. They will enjoy challenges and problem-solving, have some affinity with technology and see ongoing learning as an important part of their professional development.

### How do you become a Sonographer?

When people finish their degree in Medical Imaging they will begin working in a Diagnostic Imaging or Radiology Department of a hospital or in a private radiology practice. A fully qualified sonographer has completed a graduate diploma in ultrasound. Radiographers may be given the opportunity to train as a sonographer but will need to have:

- An undergraduate medical imaging degree or its equivalent. In recent times, people who have degrees in medicine, radiation therapy, nursing and biomedical sciences have also been able to train as sonographers.
- A position in a department or practice where training as a sonographer is offered. This is so the person has at least three days per week of ultrasound experience.

It takes two years for a person to train in order to complete a graduate diploma in ultrasound.

### Where does a Sonographer study?

Many Australian universities offer graduate diplomas in medical ultrasound. These include:

- Monash University
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
- Sydney University
- Queensland Institute of Technology
- Charles Sturt University

The Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine (ASUM) offers a professionally based qualification called the Diploma of Medical Ultrasound (DMU), which takes two years to complete.

### What else can a Sonographer do?

Sonographers are perceived as successful, allied health professionals who are capable of taking on roles in:

- Clinical Leadership: Management and tutor positions are available within large hospital departments or private radiology practices to improve the quality, workflow and overall provision of ultrasound. "Sonographer practitioner" is a new term which describes the advanced interpretive skills some sonographers acquire with clinical experience.
- Education: Clinical teaching within universities as lecturers.
- Research: Research positions and PhDs are available to sonographers.
- Corporate Management: Sonographers are often recruited into management roles within private radiology practices.
- Corporate applications: Opportunities are available for sonographers to work with imaging equipment companies as application specialists to train users in clinical practice.
- Corporate sales: Equipment companies also require sonographers to sell their equipment to private radiology groups and hospitals.

In recent times, sonographers have also begun to create their own businesses, in partnership with other imaging professionals such as radiologists and medical imaging technologists. Sonographers are always in demand.

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