

Career Opportunities

Ultrasound Exams for Fetal Hearts

(NAPSA)—One of the most popular fields in prenatal care is still in its infancy, but it's growing up fast. Fetal echocardiogram specialists examine a baby's heart when it is still only the size of a grape. Information that the specialist collects can help change the course of the baby's life—or even save it.

Fetal echocardiography (FE) is a test using sound waves (ultrasound) to show the structure of an unborn baby's heart. The test differs from a routine ultrasound exam in that it lets specialists examine a baby's heart in much greater detail (often an obstetrician may only get a limited view of a baby's heart with normal ultrasound). That's not the case with fetal echocardiography.

The procedure can help detect fetal heart abnormalities before birth, allowing for faster medical or surgical intervention once the baby is born. This improves the chance of survival after delivery for babies with heart defects. As a result, the tests have become increasingly popular and the demand for people certified in FE has increased significantly.

To help facilitate the increased demand, the American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS) recently established a specialty credential for healthcare professionals interested in FE. The credentials issued by ARDMS are considered among the best known in diagnostic sonography and are well recognized in the medical field.



Growing Field—Fetal echocardiogram specialists can examine an unborn baby's heart when it's still the size of a grape.

Candidates for ARDMS certification must have an education in sonography and/or other allied health education, including classroom work and clinical instruction, and extensive experience in the clinical setting with patients. To gain certification, sonographers must pass two tests. One exam covers the physics, principles and instrumentation of ultrasound. The other covers the specialty of FE.

Once certified, ARDMS' continuing education program helps ensure that FE specialists stay up to date on new technology in the field.

For more information, visit www.ardms.org.