



This information is for all sonographers practising in BC.

Joint College Information Sheet

Registered BC sonographers have an opportunity to join BC Medical Laboratory technologists (BCSLS), Medical Radiography technologists (BCAMRT), and Cardiology technologists (CTABC) in their proposal for a joint BC college. BCUS members will vote on pursuing this opportunity at their upcoming AGM.

Can I vote at the AGM?

The BCUS AGM and SonoSaturday Education Day (seven Continuing Medical Education credits) will be held on Saturday, October 22, 2011 at the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre in Vancouver. The AGM will feature a 1.5-hour presentation and discussion on the college issue, with BCAMRT, BCSLS, and CTABC representatives in attendance. It will be video-conferenced to some remote sites, thereby enabling eligible sonographers to participate in the joint college discussion and vote.

Only **active BCUS members** who attend an AGM in person may vote, but attending at a video-conferenced site will constitute attending in person. (Members attending remotely will not be eligible to vote if technical problems prevent the video-conferencing.) Active BCUS members may attend the AGM and college presentation without charge (1030 AM, Saturday Oct 22, 2011). All eligible BC sonographers are encouraged to attend the meeting, join in the discussion, and vote.

An “active BCUS member” is a member of BCUS who holds current registration with CARDUP or ARDMS and is employed as a Diagnostic Medical Sonographer, a Diagnostic Medical Ultrasound instructor, or a Diagnostic Medical Sonographer in research. If you are a registered and employed sonographer who wants to become a BCUS member, go to www.regonline.ca/bcus2011dues.

If you work outside the Lower Mainland and would like to host a remote video-conference site at your hospital or clinic, contact BCUS at bcus@shaw.ca by September 31, 2011.

To register for the full 7-CME SonoSaturday and AGM, go to <http://www.regonline.ca/oct2011sonosaturday>

What is a college?

Sonography is not currently a licensed profession in British Columbia, and it has no college.

Provincial governments enact college legislation to protect individuals from harms that might occur when unqualified personnel deliver critical services. A college licenses practitioners who meet and maintain specific criteria and standards, and handles investigations and disciplinary procedures in response to complaints about licensed practitioners. Initiatives that may lead to the creation of a legislated college include government initiatives, public demand, and proposals from professional groups. When a new college is created, it is covered by BC's *Health Professions Act* (see http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96183_01).

A college primarily created and run by the profession is called a “self-regulated” college. Examples of the 25 self-regulated health colleges in BC are those for physicians, nurses, massage therapists, dental technicians, and midwives (see <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/professional-regulation/>).

What is the history of the joint college proposal?

In 2007, BCAMRT and BCSLS submitted a “joint college” proposal to the BC government (see www.bcus.org for a copy of the proposal). CTABC subsequently joined in the proposal, and BCUS members will decide on October 22, 2011 whether or not to join as well.

Over the past year, BCUS has endeavoured to contact and inform all BC sonographers about this opportunity. E-mail was sent to BCUS members and to previous SonoSaturday attendees, CSDMS e-mailed information to their BC members, and HSA e-mailed information to its sonographer members. BCUS also faxed information to all known fax numbers for BC hospital and clinic ultrasound departments. If you know of any sonographers who have not received this Joint College Information Sheet, please share it with them.

Are there sonography colleges in other jurisdictions?

In the US, Oregon and New Mexico have legislated sonographer licensing. There are no sonography colleges in Canada but some provinces are considering legislation.

BC	sonographers have opportunity for joint proposal with three other diagnostic professions
AB	sonographers are included under physician Regulations and pursuing self-regulation
SK	four groups are proposing a joint college (lab, x-ray, cardiology, sonography)
MB	no activity; no provincial society
ON	government report on sonography college investigations due in October, 2013; OSDMS (Ontario sonographers) have lobbied to move this date forward
QC	sonographer certification process is unique in Quebec and no information is available
NB	sonographers are seeking a private member’s bill to be submitted this fall
NS	sonographers and radiographers have presented a joint proposal to government
NL	sonographers are anticipating an invitation to meet with the government
PE	no activity
YT	no activity
NT	no activity
NU	no activity

What would a college do for us?

BC employers are not currently required to hire only qualified sonographers. This prevents the College of Physicians and Surgeons’ Diagnostic Accreditation Committee from requiring that only qualified sonographers work in accredited labs. A college would define the licensing criteria for sonographers and raise practice standards by preventing unqualified individuals from practising sonography in BC.

What would a college not do for us?

- negotiate or influence salary or working conditions (HSA responsibility)
- promote the profession (BCUS and CSDMS responsibility)
- represent the interests of the profession (BCUS and CSDMS responsibility)
- advocate on behalf of the profession (BCUS and CSDMS responsibility)
- provide education and CME’s (BCUS and other providers’ responsibility)
- provide certification (CARDUP provides Canadian certification)
- provide group liability insurance (CSDMS service)

What are our options?

- Take no action (although the government could impose a college at its discretion).
- Propose a standalone College of Sonography (BCUS investigated this option but found it too costly for our small group).
- Join the proposal for a joint college with laboratory, radiography, and cardiology technologists

(see 2007 joint proposal on BCUS website at www.bcus.org).

How much would it cost me?

BC colleges are funded by their members, whether or not they are self-regulated.

The fee estimate in the 2007 joint college proposal was \$300 per member per year. Annual dues would be tax deductible and there would be no separate BCUS dues. Sonographer dues in a joint college would be lower than those in a standalone college because there would be approximately 10,000 members in the joint college, making it the third largest health-related college in BC after nurses and physicians.

What issues need to be discussed at the AGM?

- Governments are generally moving away from self-regulating colleges because the public views them as having a conflict of interest. Is this initiative therefore a waste of time and money?
- Will a sufficient number of sonographers be willing to serve on college committees?
- We will have to define the limited practice of ultrasound by non-sonographers (emergency physicians, anesthetists, mammographers, etc.).
- Historical relationships between radiography and sonography have been stumbling blocks for joint colleges in some provinces. This may not be an issue in BC since four groups are included in the proposal—two large groups (lab and x-ray) and two smaller groups (cardiology and sonography).
- How will BCUS fund our share of the development costs for a revised proposal?

What are the advantages of the proposal?

- Unqualified practitioners would no longer be employed as sonographers.
- Enforced standards would result in less missed pathology and fewer misdiagnoses.
- Transfer of functions to sonographers from other professions (e.g., from nurses and physicians) cannot occur without a college—see list of tasks that can be performed only by those legislated to perform them at <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/professional-regulation/hpc/review/reserved-list.html>.
- Sonography would be recognized as a profession in BC law.
- Patients would have a responsible body to which they could report concerns (BCUS is sometimes contacted by concerned patients but cannot refer those complaints to a responsible body).

What are the disadvantages of the proposal?

- The cost is unknown.
- A college would not resolve perceived salary issues (i.e., rates of pay for sonographers compared to other diagnostic practitioners).
- The current government had generally been averse to imposing more regulation and therefore may never take action on a joint college proposal.
- Some sonographers see no need for more regulation.

How would we proceed if the motion is approved at the AGM?

BCUS would meet with BCSLS, BCAMRT, and CTABC and the four groups would engage a lawyer or another suitable advisor to develop a revised proposal. The four groups would submit the proposal to the BC government, which may agree or decline to accept or implement the proposal.