

**EP.WE.338****Ambulatory Ultrasound Scans Reduce Inpatient Admissions During COVID-19: A Need for the Expansion of Ambulatory Services**

L Cornett, S Davidson, K McElvanna

*Criagavon Area Hospital, Southern Health and Social Care Trust*

**Aim:** With the increased need to manage patients out of hospital during COVID-19, it was anticipated that need for ambulatory imaging would increase. This study aimed to assess the demand for ambulatory ultrasounds (US) during the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact on inpatient admissions.

**Methods:** A retrospective review of patients presenting to the Emergency Department (ED) between 12<sup>th</sup> July – 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2020 who required an US as first line imaging. Electronic Care Records were used to collect data regarding type of US i.e., inpatient, or ambulatory, time taken for ambulatory US and outcome after imaging. The same period in 2019 was assessed for comparison.

**Results:** In 2020, 100 patients required an US compared to 88 in 2019. 37% (37/100) of which were discharged for an ambulatory US, compared to 14.8% (13/88) in 2019 ( $p = 0.006$ ). The average waiting time for an ambulatory US in 2019 was 2 days, this increased to 7 days in 2020. Following ambulatory US in 2020 43.2% (16/37) required further outpatient imaging or assessment; similar outcomes were seen in 2019 with 46.2% (6/13). Overall, there was a 150% increase in the use of ambulatory US, with a 26% decrease in admissions in 2020 vs. 2019.

**Conclusions:** There was a significant increase in the number of patients discharged from ED to undergo an ambulatory US resulting in reduced inpatient admissions. This increase in demand is reflected by the prolonged waiting time highlighting the requirement for expansion of ambulatory services to meet this clinical need.