

# 5 Things That Will Make You A Better Cardiac Sonographer...TODAY!

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## 1. Always Practice Good Ergonomics

You've probably heard this bit of advice a thousand times. But I'm going to tell it to you again! :)

Always be mindful of your body positioning!

Repetitive stress injuries are rampant among sonographers, and if not kept as a top priority, they can become career ending injuries.

I understand that it's not always possible to maintain a perfect ergonomically correct scanning position in the real world.

But what **IS** possible in the real world is to do everything you can to make yourself comfortable.

For example...

If you don't have an armrest, try rolling up a towel or even a sheet to prop up your arm.

Or if you're working in the hospital and doing echos bedside, don't reach over things to scan the patient. Ask the nurse to help you move any equipment that might be in your way. You'll be surprised at how often they're willing to help you out (If you ask nicely!)

## 2. Practice Scanning With Your Non-Dominant Hand

Say what!?!

That's right! Try to learn how to scan with your opposite hand. I understand this sounds insane at first, but trust me! It **WILL** make you a better cardiac sonographer.

I've seen first hand where learning how to scan with the opposite hand has saved a sonographer's career.

This person experienced a severe shoulder injury (due to repetitive stress, and pushing too hard). The injury was to their dominant scanning shoulder.

So instead of not being able to work because of the injury, they simply started scanning with their non-dominant hand. All while giving their injured shoulder a much needed rest.

After a year of this, the shoulder healed and they were able to go back to scanning with their normal side again.

Being able to scan like this saved this cardiac sonographers career.

Curious about how to do this? Send me a message to [don@discoverecho.com](mailto:don@discoverecho.com) and I'd love to discuss it in further detail with you.

### **3. Invest In Your Patients**

Now, I don't mean you need to become their best friend. But just a little bit of expressed interest in your patient goes a long, long way.

Even by just simply asking "Hey, what brought you in here for the echo today?" can open an entire deluge of dialogue (and often times monologue! LOL!)

Understand that many of your patients are elderly and don't always have many people to talk to. Again, you don't have to be their best friend, but a simple listening ear will get you more kudos than you can imagine.

In a matter of less than a minute, you'll get the sense of whether your patient wants to talk or not. If they don't...great. If they do...then give them two minutes of your time and be a good listening ear.

I had one coworker ask me once, "What in the world do you guys talk about in there?" I answered him, "It's the patient that does the talking, not me."

But don't ever allow the discussion interfere with the exam, or your focus. Learning how to balance this is something we'll dive deeper into on the website. So keep your eyes open for that.

## **4. Invest In Yourself**

It's been said that you should invest at least 5% of your income on bettering yourself professionally. And I totally agree!

Now 5% might seem like a lot, but it doesn't all have to come out of your own pocket.

Check with your employer to see if they offer any continuing education benefits. If they do...take advantage of them!

If they don't, then be sure to use all the free education that's available online. You can find some of these free educational sites on my post, [3 Best Free Echocardiography CME Websites](#). I do my best to keep this list updated. Free is a good price, so take advantage of them!

Even if you have to pay for Continuing Education, it's so worth it. It's ok to invest in yourself. None of us know everything! There is ALWAYS more to learn in echocardiography.

Investing in yourself is especially important if you work in a very small echo lab, or by yourself. That's because it's difficult, and sometimes impossible to bounce ideas and pathology off anyone else.

So signing up for courses is a great way to interact, and learn from others who dedicate themselves to Echocardiography.

## **5. Don't Push Hard**

Your patients will thank you, and so will your shoulder and wrist.

Fact is, there's no reason these days to push overly hard on patients. With the improvement in ultrasound technology, we're able to obtain much higher quality images at much farther depths than we've been able to in the past.

A sonographer once told me that they believed they could obtain better images by pressing so hard between the ribs that the ribs would spread apart, allowing the footprint of the probe to get in closer to the heart.

That's complete crap. Please, **DON'T EVER DO THIS.**

Now I'm not naive. I understand that there are circumstances when we must press firmly in order to obtain the information. But this should be the exception.

If you're unable to obtain the images you need, move the probe. Move the patient. Have the patient inhale and hold it. Have the patient exhale and hold it. Use imaging contrast if you need to.

There's many ways to try and enhance image quality. Pressing harder shouldn't be the go to method.

Besides, by always pressing hard, your begging for a shoulder or wrist injury...and no one wants that!

## **Conclusion**

Congratulations...You're on the path to becoming a better sonographer! That's why you're reading this. And that's a great place to be. We should ALL try to be better...better sonographers, better coworkers...better humans!

Thanks for taking the time to read and consider these 5 tips for being better at what you do.

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