

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) re:
Regulation of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers under
*The Medical Radiation Technologists Act, 2006***

Q.1. What is the purpose of the proposed regulation of diagnostic medical sonographers?

A.1. Regulating diagnostic medical sonographers (DMS) with the Saskatchewan Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (SAMRT) would bring all medical radiation and imaging specialties under one regulatory framework to enhance patient protection by establishing entry to practice requirements and continuing oversight of practice.

Q.2. What will the name of the regulatory body be if diagnostic medical sonographers are included under the SAMRT Act?

A.2. In considering options for a name, we sought to represent all five disciplines, and to clearly indicate to the public, our regulated members, and other key stakeholders what the role of the organization is. The consultation included in this package provides an opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback on three name options which have been vetted by the Regulation of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers Committee and the SAMRT Council.

Q.3. What would be the protected title of regulated sonographers and which categories of sonographers would be included under the protected title?

A.3. **Protected Title:** The protected title for sonographers will be ‘Diagnostic Medical Sonographer’ or ‘DMS.’ The practice of DMS is divided into three main sub-specialties; all of which are included in this application under the protected title of DMS:

- i. Generalist sonographers, who image a variety of examinations, including abdominal, pelvic, obstetrical, breast and other soft tissues;
- ii. Vascular sonographers, who image arteries and veins throughout the body; and
- iii. Cardiac sonographers or echocardiographers, who image cardiac structures.

- **Labour Mobility:** A consistent approach to the protected title ensures a smooth labour mobility approach to DMS transferring across Canada. In Canada, DMS are regulated as an additional discipline with the Nova Scotia College of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy Professionals (NSCMIRTP), the College of Medical Radiation and Imaging Technologist of Ontario (CMRITO), the Order of Technologists in Medical Imaging, Radiation Oncology and Medical Electrophysiology of Quebec (OTIMROEPMQ) and upon proclamation with the Alberta College of Medical Diagnostic and Therapeutic Technologists (ACDMTT). Across Canada, the discipline is recognized as Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (DMS).

- **Specialty Titles:** Only members of SAMRT registered in a particular discipline are legally authorized to use that protected title. However, although these titles are protected, members are also encouraged to use their credentialed specialty title in addition to the protected title. For example: DMS, CRGS or, DMS, CRCS or, DMS, CRVS. The same holds true for the specialty certifications MRTs have earned, for example RTMN, CTIC, PET/CT or, RTR, CIR.

Q.4. What benefits can diagnostic medical sonographers expect if regulated?

A.4. The benefits of self-regulation include recognition of the education and training diagnostic medical sonographers have undergone to practice as professionals, authorized use of a protected title (DMS), and assurance that the profession's standards are enforced and the public protected.

By being self-regulated under the SAMRT, diagnostic medical sonographers will join not only their medical radiation technologist colleagues, but also other healthcare professions registered in the province's 27 regulated colleges, including medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and physiotherapy.

As a regulated diagnostic medical sonographer, Saskatchewan DMS would be able to seamlessly transfer to other regulated provinces without the need to prove qualifications or to pass a certification examination.

Q.5. How can public protection be enhanced by regulation of diagnostic medical sonographers?

- A.5. The mandate of the SAMRT is to serve and protect the public by making sure that its members are qualified to practice and are practising professionally. Through the inclusion of diagnostic medical sonographers, our goal is to strengthen the safety, quality, oversight and transparency of medical radiation and imaging services by:
- i. setting and enforcing standards of practice, ethics, guidelines, and policies for the practice and conduct of members;
 - ii. registering only those individuals who have met the educational and examination requirements for competent practice before they can practice or use the professional title;
 - iii. requiring members to maintain continuous education (CE) credits (credits already required by the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonography (ARDMS) or Sonography Canada are eligible for SAMRT CE);
 - iv. addressing complaints and concerns from the public, patients, and employers regarding professional conduct issues through its complaints and discipline process; and
 - v. providing current information about each member's registration status and past conduct to the public on its website.

Q.6. How does the regulation of diagnostic medical sonographers protect the public from risks of harm?

A.6. Like other health profession regulators (e.g., the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan) that ensure there are robust minimum standards in place for their members to protect the public from harm, the SAMRT would do the same by ensuring that all diagnostic medical sonographers meet minimum qualification standards thereby reducing potential risks to patients through inappropriate use of this technology.

Q.7. Have any potential risks to patients been identified as a result of the inappropriate use of ultrasound technology and/or unethical conduct by sonographers?

A.7. Yes. Potential risks of harm to patients include physical harm, missed pathology, inaccurate examination results, and potential sexual abuse due to the invasive nature of the procedures performed by sonographers.

Q.8. How will sonographers currently working in Saskatchewan be transitioned into the SAMRT as licensed professionals?

A.8. A grandparenting criteria will be used that will allow any DMS that meets one of the following criteria to be eligible to licence in Saskatchewan:

- i. A person who is an active credentialed member of Sonography Canada.
- ii. A person who has been certified to practice diagnostic medical sonography by the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS), and who has engaged in the practice of diagnostic medical sonography in Saskatchewan during the past 12 months.
- iii. A person who, has engaged in the practice of diagnostic medical sonography in Saskatchewan for 1,200 practice hours in the last five years OR 300 hours in the past three years for a secondary discipline/new graduate.
- iv. Graduated from an accredited DMS program in Canada and passed the national entry to practice exams.
- v. Currently is licensed as a DMS in a regulated province. (Ontario or Nova Scotia).

Once the transition period is complete, ARDMS certification will not be recognized for the purposes of entry to practice for any new registrants. New applicants who are ARDMS certified will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the SAMRT's Registration Committee based on Council-approved policy. The SAMRT will continue to recognize Sonography Canada as a certifying body. This registration framework is consistent with both Nova Scotia and Ontario which is an important component of labour mobility.

Q.9. Will any sonographers be out of work because of self-regulation?

A.9. We anticipate that most DMS will be transitioned into the SAMRT through a grandparenting process based on recognized minimum standards of practice (i.e. Sonography Canada and ARDMS certification). However, it is possible that some sonographers will

not be eligible to be automatically transitioned into the SAMRT. For these individuals additional training may be required to help them meet any existing competency gaps so that they will be eligible for licensure.

Q.10. Is the regulation of diagnostic medical sonographers going to limit patients' access to ultrasound services?

A.10. The regulation of sonographers is not anticipated to have any significant impact on practitioners' availability to the public; rather, it is anticipated that regulation will increase the integrity, safety and quality of ultrasound services provided in the province.

Q.11. How will diagnostic medical sonographers ensure their profession is represented on Council and Legislated Committees?

A.11. The proposed recommendations include two key areas to address DMS representation:

- i. That one additional observer position be added to the number and composition of elected Council, and that the position be filled by an appointed DMS member for a three-year term. A DMS member will be eligible to run for any council vacancies at the next election cycle following proclamation.
- ii. That for a three-year term, following proclamation, one additional position be added to the Professional Conduct and Discipline Committee; and the position be filled by an appointed DMS member.

These recommendations ensure representation of DMS on council and for the legislated committees in the early years of their self-regulation.

Q.12. What other regulations will diagnostic medical sonographers have to comply with?

A.12. The proposed recommendations highlight a variety of regulations that currently apply to MRTs and would be amended to include DMS. The regulations relate to requirements such as continuing education, professional liability insurance, maintaining minimum practice hours, accredited education program and certification, compliance with policies such as a Code of Conduct and Scope and Standards of Practice. Details of these recommendations are included in the consultation package in the Rational for Recommendations document.

Q. 13. What would be the next step following this consultation?

A.13. Since our application for self-regulation was accepted, this follow-up consultation will address three areas of concern:

- i. The protected titles for diagnostic medical sonographers, per section 22 of the Act.
- ii. The proposed name of the regulatory body
- iii. Proposed transition and governance of the diagnostic medical sonographers

The SAMRT will respond to feedback provided by stakeholders and will share the results with the Ministry of Health (MoH). The SAMRT will use the feedback to inform our report for the MoH which will be submitted in early October 2021.

Questions about regulation can be directed to SAMRT by email at: debbieschatz@samrt.org or by fax at 306-543-6161.