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Limits of Echocardiography in PAH

Announcer:
You're listening to *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD. Today, Dr. Brandy McKelvy will discuss the limitations of echocardiograms for identifying pulmonary arterial hypertension. Dr. McKelvy is a Professor of Medicine in the Divisions of Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine at McGovern Medical School at the University of Texas at Houston. Let's hear from her now.

Dr. McKelvy:
Echo is a great screening tool, and we use it for many disease states, specifically to look for pulmonary hypertension. But it is not 100 percent.

There are some groups of patients that the echo will over-detect or overestimate the pressures. That's what we're looking for with an echo: an estimation of what your pulmonary pressures are. But again, it's just an estimation. Those numbers can change minute by minute by your volume status. If you're in the hospital or if you've been acutely ill, those pressures can vary. And so it's not always a one and done exact science with an echo.

If it overestimates, sometimes we have to redo the echo. But we are more concerned with the people that the echo underestimates. So for somebody who has symptoms who gives us a lot of pretest probability that they might have pulmonary hypertension or of those diseases that's associated with it, the echo might not totally elucidate that. Those people need more specific testing.

So the echo is not 100 percent. It's not foolproof. It is very good in that, once we've established a diagnosis with pulmonary hypertension, and if there's a good correlation between the echo and the right heart cath, we'll use it to monitor people longitudinally. And so it's non-invasive, it's easy, it doesn't hurt, and many centers have the ability to do an echo. So it's a great tool, but it's not a perfect tool.

Announcer:
That was Dr. Brandy McKelvy talking about echocardiograms for pulmonary arterial hypertension diagnosis. To access this and other episodes in our series, visit *Clinician's Roundtable* on ReachMD.com, where you can Be Part of the Knowledge. Thanks for listening!

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