



# Clinic Tips

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## Completing Hands-On Training for Limited Obstetric Ultrasounds

NIFLA pioneered the use of limited obstetric ultrasound for pregnant women at risk for abortion in the late 1990s. The first [Institute in Limited Obstetric Ultrasound](#) was created by NIFLA as the first of two parts of training in this skill. Then, NIFLA partnered with Soundview Imaging to provide the second part - hands-on training. NIFLA has always promoted excellence in medical services. Together, we have paved the way for nurses to be trained in this skill. The goal has been to train many nurses to provide life-saving ultrasounds efficiently yet excellently. However, we often get questions about how nurses can “cross the finish line” once they have attended part one of training (didactic).

Two parts are necessary for acquiring the needed education and training: didactic training (part 1) and hands-on training (part 2). Individuals master educational material and hands-on training differently based on previous experience, age, aptitudes for learning a challenging skill, and various other factors.

After completing the didactic portion of this training (part 1), the nurse moves forward, learning the complex skills for scanning safely. **This process varies with the individual trainee.**

**Hands-on training is based on competency and not a number of completed training scans.** However, after working with hundreds of nurses and being asked for a number and a range of ultrasounds that are needed for a nurse to become competent, our team (reluctantly) gave a range. A nurse usually completes 50-75 hands-on training scans by adhering to a systematic protocol. The actual number of supervised scans is rarely less than 60 scans, while some require 75 or more supervised scans.

The “how-to’s” of hands-on scanning must be taught and supervised by a medical professional highly experienced and skilled in sonography, such as a physician with OB ultrasound skills or an RDMS with a current specialty credential in OB/GYN. The medical director then must give final approval for the nurse to scan independently.

### How to Obtain the Hands-On Scanning:

There are several ways one can acquire hands-on instruction. NIFLA recommends one of the following ways (or a combination of these may be best) for training your medical personnel:

1. [NIFLA Ultrasound Practicum](#): In 2023, NIFLA developed and began offering four-day

practicums, where experienced and highly skilled RDMSs instruct and supervise training. Many have found the *NIFLA Practicum* to be a huge boost for trainees to acquire a significant portion of the necessary scans for competency. The *NIFLA Practicum* aims for each attendee to perform 30 or more ultrasounds (including abdominal and transvaginal) on pregnant models. The *NIFLA Practicum* seeks to meet the need of clinics without large patient volumes for trainees to perform enough hands-on “model scans” for competency in a timely fashion. Some larger clinics around the country have graciously been willing to share their blessings by hosting a *NIFLA Practicum* where trainees come and benefit from obtaining supervised scans.

2. [Soundview Imaging’s](#) onsite training at your facility with your machine, patients, and/or models. Soundview RDMSs have years of training and skills assessment for competency in pregnancy clinics. They can be brought into your clinic to complete the needed scans for competency after one attends a *NIFLA Practicum*, provide the full training, or assess after a portion of hands-on training with a local RDMS (see below). Members of the Soundview team work with your clinic to customize the time/days necessary for your medical personnel to acquire skills with assessments and documentation. Full training usually takes 8-10 days for up to three trainees at a time. Yet, if one has participated in a *NIFLA Practicum* or worked with local RDMS, the time needed to complete the training varies with the level of skills acquired. Occasionally, clinics may join and share training costs.
3. **Training with a local RDMS:** Many communities have a skilled RDMS with a heart to work with your team. These local RDMSs can teach and supervise the nurse after she attends the *NIFLA Institute in Limited Obstetric Ultrasound*. NIFLA has also developed the “[PULSE](#)” webinar, designed for the local RDMS to get a basic overview of the role of limited ultrasounds in a pregnancy clinic setting. PULSE enables the RDMS to understand the legal/medical basics of pregnancy clinic ultrasounds. The local RDMS would need to provide a skills assessment for documented competency.
4. **Combinations of the ways described above:**
  - A local RDMS could provide a portion of the hands-on training prior to or following a *NIFLA Practicum*.
  - A local RDMS could provide a portion of the hands-on training, and then a Soundview RDMS could come for a number of days to complete the training and provide a skills assessment for documented competency.
  - The nurse could complete a *NIFLA Practicum*, and then Soundview could complete the training and provide a skills assessment for documented competency.
  - The nurse could take two of *NIFLA’s Practicums* and would potentially receive documented competency following completion of the last *NIFLA Practicum*.
  - The center could partner with another nearby center to bring Soundview in to train up to three nurses at one time. (Soundview may be able to help coordinate this partnership.)

**In summary, a person reaches the finish line when they acquire competency.** They have gained a lot of knowledge and demonstrated skills to scan safely. However, maintaining competency is as essential as the initial education and training. It involves continued education, skills growth, and assessment. We recommend that nurses perform at least 100 scans per year to maintain competency and improve skills. In addition, 5-10 CEUs related to ultrasound are recommended annually. An annual skills assessment is also highly recommended. Nurses often state that their first annual skills assessment uncovers some bad habits and allows them to improve the diagnostic quality of their skills.

Women and their unborn babies deserve the best of care from highly skilled medical personnel in

your clinic. Preparing personnel to provide ultrasounds is a significant undertaking and investment for a clinic, which needs to be well understood by the clinic leadership and those pursuing the ability to scan. NIFLA and Soundview want to facilitate your clinic's education, training, and competency, always in pursuit of excellence.

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