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LUS me up: elevating ARDS diagnosis

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Abstract

Boumans et al. conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to evaluate the diagnostic accuracy of lung ultrasound (LUS) in acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). The study found that LUS has high specificity (0.942, 95% CI 0.856–0.978) but variable sensitivity (0.631, 95% CI 0.450–0.782) for identifying ARDS-related diffuse lung pathologies. LUS demonstrates comparable or superior performance to chest radiography and CT scans, facilitating rapid bedside diagnosis and management. However, variability in operator experience and interpretation criteria, as well as challenges in detecting mild or early-stage ARDS, remain. The study highlights the need for further research to refine LUS protocols and training, enhancing its application in clinical practice and improving patient outcomes.

Introduction

Boumans et al. conducted a comprehensive systematic review and meta-analysis to assess the diagnostic accuracy of lung ultrasound (LUS) in acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) [1]. This study provides crucial insights into how LUS can improve diagnostic capabilities and clinical decision-making in critical care settings.

The meta-analysis by Boumans et al. underscores LUS's specificity (0.942, 95% CI 0.856–0.978) in identifying diffuse lung pathology indicative of ARDS, such as bilateral opacities and respiratory failure. These findings corroborate earlier research highlighting LUS's effectiveness in detecting consolidations and diffuse B-lines associated with severe lung injury. Moreover, LUS demonstrates comparable or superior performance to traditional imaging modalities like chest radiography (CXR) and CT

scans, although its sensitivity varies (pooled sensitivity 0.631, 95% CI 0.450–0.782) [2, 3].

In clinical practice, LUS serves as a pivotal tool for early recognition and management of ARDS. Its ability to visualize critical features such as multiple B-lines, pleural line irregularities, and consolidations enables clinicians to make timely decisions on ventilation strategies, fluid management, and positioning maneuvers. The bedside accessibility of LUS facilitates rapid diagnosis and intervention, providing distinct advantages over conventional imaging methods [2, 3].

Despite its diagnostic strengths, uncertainties surround LUS in ARDS diagnosis. Questions persist regarding its sensitivity in detecting mild or early-stage ARDS and its capability to differentiate focal and non-focal subphenotypes. Variability in operator experience, equipment settings, and interpretation criteria further impacts its diagnostic accuracy across different clinical scenarios. The standardization of LUS protocols for ARDS diagnosis remains a contentious issue, necessitating validated approaches tailored to diverse patient populations [4].

Boumans et al.'s meta-analysis significantly contributes to the literature by consolidating evidence on LUS's diagnostic accuracy in ARDS [1]. It highlights LUS's high specificity while acknowledging sensitivity and subphenotype classification challenges. This synthesis informs

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da Hora Passos *et al. Critical Care*   (2024) 28:257

Page 2 of 2

clinical practice by guiding the appropriate use of LUS and advocating for further research to refine its diagnostic capabilities. Future studies should focus on conducting comparative analyses against gold standard imaging techniques, validating LUS across varying severities of ARDS, and optimizing operator training and protocol standardization [4].

As clinicians, we find Boumans et al.'s study compelling, particularly regarding LUS's potential to revolutionize ARDS diagnosis and management. While its specificity in detecting diffuse lung pathology is commendable, the variability in sensitivity and challenges in subphenotype classification underscore the need for continued research and standardized protocols. Integrating LUS into clinical practice has the potential to enhance patient outcomes through more precise and timely interventions. However, it is crucial to approach its application judiciously, considering both its strengths and current limitations.

In conclusion, while LUS shows promise in advancing ARDS diagnosis, addressing uncertainties and optimizing its application through standardized protocols and ongoing research are imperative. Clinicians are encouraged to harness LUS's strengths while recognizing its limitations, ensuring judicious utilization and continual improvement in critical care settings.

Abbreviations
LUS   Lung ultrasound
ARDS   Acute respiratory distress syndrome
CXR   Chest radiography
CT   Computer tomography

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate
Not applicable.

Consent for publication
Not applicable.

Competing interests
The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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