O&G practitioners use ultrasound as an extension of their clinical practice and consider it to be, with prudent use, a safe procedure for both the woman and the fetus. There is an increasing frequency of documented incidences of transducer contamination and infection control issues, with subsequent increasing risk of transmission to patients.

The objectives of this study were to identify the risk factors for infection transmission in O&G ultrasound and suggest guidelines for reducing the risks.

Methods: A literature search was undertaken using keywords: ultrasound, infection, prevention, transducers, probes, guidelines. Case reports of, and risk factors for infection transmission during an O&G ultrasound examination were identified.

Results: Identified risks included a lack of infection control protocols created for O&G practitioners, the varying integrity of probe covers used for TV exams, and the lack of awareness of, or compliance to, the correct procedure for the reprocessing of transducers and other ultrasound equipment post examination. Documented risks included transmission of high-risk Human Papillomavirus (HR-HPV), hepatitis C, the viral genomes of Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), human cytomegalovirus (CMV) and Chlamydia trachomatis genetic material as well as bacterial contaminants.

Conclusion:
Identifying and raising awareness to the multiple infection risk factors involved in O&G ultrasound, and having access to, and understanding the importance of compliance to relevant infection prevention and control guidelines, should assist in improving the safety of the O&G ultrasound examination.