

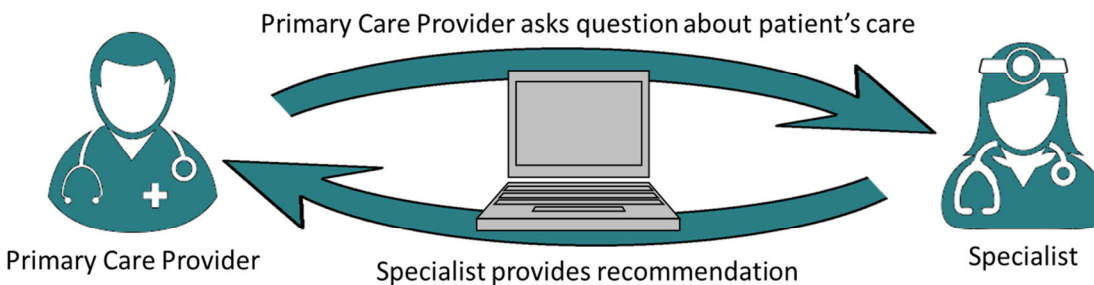
## Quality assurance of care provided through eConsult

### Position Statement

As eConsult services expand to new jurisdictions, clear quality assurance guidelines are needed to ensure that all patients receive equitable access to high-quality specialist advice.

### What is eConsult?

An eConsult service is an online application that supports prompt, secure communication between primary care providers (PCP) and specialists. PCPs log on and submit a question concerning a patient's care. Specialists respond with advice, recommendations for referral, or requests for additional info.



### Measuring Quality

An eConsult service can use several methods to gauge quality. For instance, the Champlain eConsult BASE™ service collects usage data automatically, and PCPs complete a mandatory survey at the closing of each case describing its outcome (i.e. whether a referral was required), quality, and educational value. Regular feedback is also sought from users through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

### Recommendations/Key Considerations

The ongoing success of an eConsult service depends on its ability to consistently provide PCPs with prompt access to high-quality specialist advice. To ensure ongoing quality, we recommend implementing the following strategies:

- Follow established standards set by regulatory authorities (e.g. provincial colleges).
- Evaluate the content and quality of questions asked, and define how they will be assessed.
- Create a process for random auditing of eConsults. This could be accomplished by leveraging existing processes (e.g. random chart audits conducted by provincial regulatory colleges).
- Inform patients about the service and ensure they are aware it meets high quality standards.
- Engage PCPs through surveys and interviews to assess if eConsult facilitates their ability to treat patients according to current and applicable standards of care.
- Ensure that specialists are able to receive feedback from PCPs on their responses.
- Use an established framework to assess key quality metrics. For instance, The Champlain eConsult BASE™ team uses the Quadruple Aim framework<sup>1</sup> as a lens to assess eConsult's impact on:

<b>Population Health</b> mortality, morbidity, rate of provider adoption	<b>Provider Experience</b> satisfaction, description of service benefits
<b>Patient Experience</b> response time, referral avoidance, satisfaction	<b>Cost Savings</b> cost/case, external costs (e.g. tests), patient savings

1. Bodenheimer T, Sinsky C. From triple to quadruple aim: care of the patient requires care of the provider. The Annals of Family Medicine. 2014 Nov 1;12(6):573-6.