Using eConsult to enhance delivery of genetics advice

The eConsultBASE™ service improves access to specialist care for patients by facilitating electronic communication between Primary Care Providers (PCPs) and specialists.

Between January 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020, 205 PCPs submitted 305 eConsults to 7 geneticists.

This study sought to examine the constraints to accessing genetics specialty services that are compounded by the finding that PCPs express unfamiliarity with genetics specialists and clinics, resulting in long wait times and inequitable service delivery.

Study Methods: PCP and Specialist Data Sources

PCP data was collected through eConsult BASE case closeout surveys.

Geneticist data was collected through interviews and eConsult checklists completed after each eConsult.

PCP results

- PCP received good advice for a new or additional course of action to implement: 55%
- PCP was able to confirm original course of action: 35%
- Referral was originally contemplated but now avoided as a result of eConsult: 36%

The median response time was 1.8 days.

Geneticist results

- Interview Themes
  - Geneticists derived satisfaction from completing eConsults.
  - eConsult has the potential to reduce inequities in access to care.
  - eConsult has the capacity to improve the efficiency of the delivery of care.
  - Has educational value to PCPs.

- 52% of eConsults were questions regarding cancer, over half of which were about breast/ovarian cancer.

Perceived Challenges

- Lack of awareness of eConsult leading to underutilization.
- Capacity issues if the service becomes popular.
- No perceived effect on wait time for appointments in genetics clinics.

86% of PCPs indicated their eConsult response was valuable/very valuable in guiding their ongoing evaluation or management of the patient.