

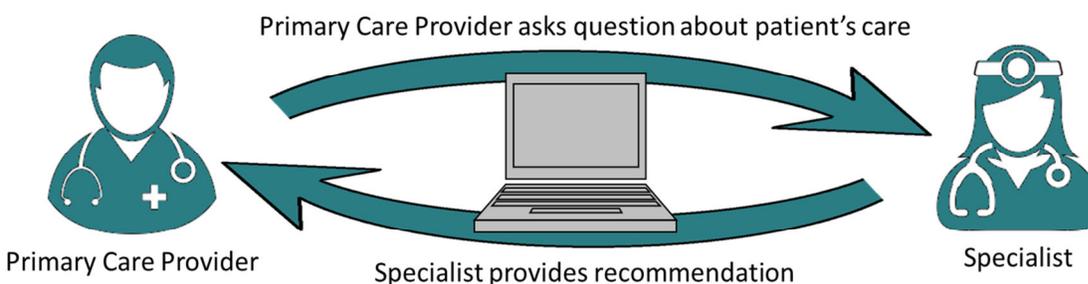
Quality assurance of care provided through eConsult

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 BASE™ eConsult 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 BASE™ eConsult team uses the Quadruple Aim framework¹ as a lens to assess eConsult's impact on:

Population Health mortality, morbidity, rate of provider adoption	Provider Experience satisfaction, description of service benefits
Patient Experience response time, referral avoidance, satisfaction	Cost Savings 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.