

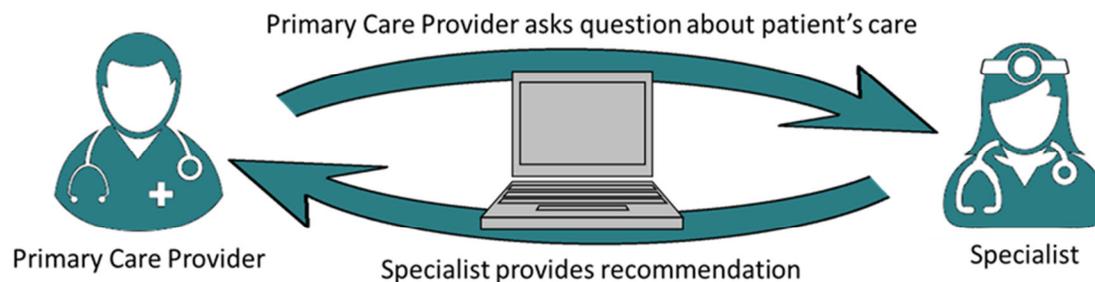
Payment

Position Statement

As eConsult services expand across Canada, new payment models are needed to ensure providers are appropriately remunerated.

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.



Remuneration for Providing eConsult Services

Payment for eConsult services varies between services, clinics, and jurisdictions. Different models have been attempted, including fee-for-service, session fees, and salaried models. On the payer side, the rate for eConsult varies between jurisdictions, with some provinces/ territories having adopted fee codes for eConsult (see Table).

Some eConsult services remunerate providers using their own system (e.g. Champlain BASE™ pays most specialists \$200/hour prorated to time spent completing a case, with some variation based on individual payment models). As eConsult services become more common, a more concrete, streamlined approach will be necessary to support clear and reasonable remuneration strategies.

Recommendations/Key Considerations

Policymakers and innovators must work together to develop new policies that clearly outline how health care providers are paid for eConsults. Key steps include:

- Developing a consistent set of fee codes for eConsult, which providers can use to bill the provincial/federal government as they do for other services. For guidance, look to provinces that have already established fee codes for eConsult services (e.g. Alberta).
- Encouraging consistency between jurisdictions. Creation of a national set of fee codes may raise significant policy challenges, but coordination between provinces/territories would facilitate eConsult's use across borders.
- Accounting for interjurisdictional eConsults by adopting a "payment follows patient" policy, with the patient's home jurisdiction ultimately responsible for covering the cost of their care.
- Engaging ministries of health, medical associations, and regulatory colleges from participating provinces/territories to create a consistent approach to provider remuneration.

Table: Fee codes in each province/territory for eConsult and teleconsult services*

Province/ Territory	Teleconsult		eConsult		In-Person
	Referring Physician	Consultant	Referring Physician	Consultant	Consultant
NU	N/A - physicians are paid sessional rates or via term contracts ¹				
NT	N/A	\$17.47 ^{2a} or \$29.13 ^{2b}	N/A - physicians are salaried		
YT	No	\$37.50 ^{3a} or \$41.60 ^{3b}	No	\$36.80 ^{3c} or	\$101.60 - \$468.00
BC	\$40.00 ^{4a}	\$15.14, ^{4b} \$15.16, ^{4c} \$40.00 ^{4d} or \$60.00 ^{4e}	No	\$10.10	\$64.00 - \$233.91
AB	\$32.90 - \$45.21 ^{5a}	\$77.35 - \$135.13 ^{5a} , \$17.23 - \$27.83 ^{5b} , \$17.23 ^{5c}	\$32.43	\$76.27	\$77.25 - \$241.82
SK	No	\$50.50 (major), \$20.40 (minor), ^{6a} or \$12.50 ^{6b}	No	\$12.50 ^{6b} or \$20.40 ^{6c}	\$61.20 - \$229.40
MB	\$15.35 ^{7a}	\$15.35, ^{7b} \$47.50, ^{7c} \$60.00 ^{7d}	No	\$15.35 ^{7b}	\$74.05 - \$252.60
ON	\$31.35	\$40.45	\$16.00	\$20.50 ^{8a}	\$65.90 - \$199.40 ^{8b}
QC	\$26.00 ^{9a}	\$17.00, ^{9b} \$35.00 ^{9c} or	No	No	\$74.05 - \$404.00
NB	No	No	No	No	\$100.00 - \$200.00
NS	\$27.83 ¹⁰	\$60.50 ¹⁰	No	No	\$150.04 ¹⁰
PE	No	\$45.00 ¹¹	No	No	\$80.00 - \$205.00
NL	No	No	No	\$50 ¹²	\$50.51 - \$250.00

- No information available regarding the provision of specialist services
- Physicians are salaried. Consultants from outside NT can bill NT as follows: a. Teleconference from physician, nurse practitioner (NP) or midwife; b. Review of imaging by a non-radiologist
- a. Telephone calls from community NPs to physicians providing scheduled emergency coverage in the hospital; b. Remote communication from physician; c. Remote communication from non-physician
- a. Billable only by a referring physician who is a general practitioner (GP); b. Calls initiated by a Community Health Representative from a First Nation Community; c. Remote communication from non-physician; d. GPs who are the consulting physician for a call from an NP; e. GPs with specialty training
- a. Telecommunication between physicians; b. Telecommunication initiated by select types of non-physicians; c. Telecommunication initiated by a pharmacist. Prices for a and b vary depending on time of day.
- a. In SK, the consultant may bill for a major or minor telephone assessment – for a major assessment, the consultant must provide a written submission of the consultant's opinion and recommendations to the referring physician; for a minor assessment, the consultant may respond by telephone, fax or email. Remote telephone calls from nurses are billed at the minor rate; b. Communication with non-physicians via phone, fax or email; c. Consultant may respond to minor telephone request by e-mail
- a. Referring physicians can bill for telephone consultations with psychiatrists only; b. remote communication from other healthcare providers; c. billable by Psychiatrists if response is made within 48 hours; d. billable by Psychiatrists if response is made within 2 hours.
- a. Only dermatologists and ophthalmologists can bill "E-Assessments," an opinion and/or recommendation provided electronically through a secure server (e.g. secure messaging, electronic medical record). The consultant may choose to return their opinion by telephone; however, a written opinion must be provided electronically or by mail. These specialties can bill \$44.45 and \$45.85, respectively; b. Billable only when patient is referred by a physician or an NP
- a. Billable only by a referring physician who is a specialist; b. Billable when initiated by a pharmacist; c. Billable when initiated by a specialist or a non-physician (not billable when initiated by a GP); d. Billable by psychiatrists only
- Gastroenterology (GI) pilot only – in place since April 2013. The in-person consultation fee is for GI specialists only
- Only for internal medicine, pediatrics, dermatology and out-of-province specialists
- Consulting specialists are paid on a pro-rated basis of \$200/hour (average consult is 15 minutes)

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