

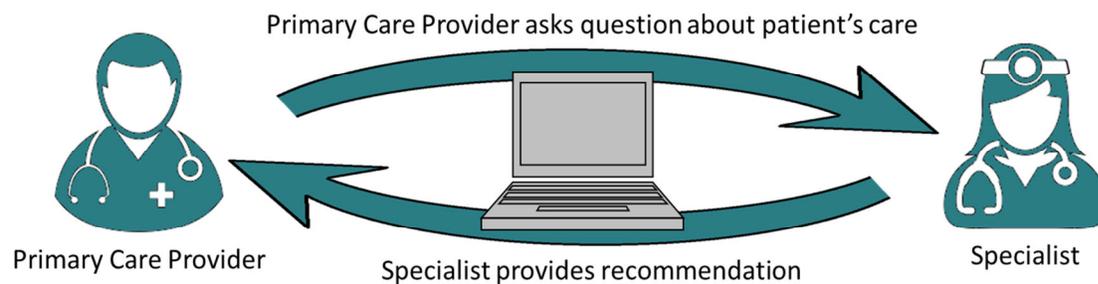
Regulation of providers using eConsult

Position Statement

When implementing eConsult in new jurisdictions, regulations are needed that ensure all patients receive high-quality care without impeding the service's ability to deliver that care.

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.



Current Regulatory Status

In Canada, eConsult services currently operate under a different set of requirements than a national, full-scale health intervention. While some regulatory elements apply (e.g. those protecting patient privacy), others, such as those governing payment or defining the specialist role, are treated differently.

Recommendations/Key Considerations

In order to facilitate eConsult's transition to a full-scale, multi-provincial or national service, regulations must be established on a number of key issues, including payment, licensing, and liability.

- Examine existing fee codes to determine best strategies for provider payment. The concept of "payment follows patient" should be upheld.
- Ultimately, specialists should be accountable for the advice they give.
- Define a set of key characteristics that participating providers should demonstrate (e.g. experienced, courteous, and capable of delivering timely responses).
- Develop best practices for PCPs and specialists who join the service in order to ensure patient safety.
- Determine how specialist competencies should be evaluated: what makes a good response? The Champlain BASE™ team is currently examining how eConsult cases can be incorporated into continuing medical education. These studies will help inform what makes a quality eConsult.
- Establish clear consequences for providers who fail to meet the minimum standard of care. Providers should be made aware of these consequences from the outset.
- Leverage the feedback loop built into eConsult's structure, which allows for gathering of user responses in real-time through usage data and survey responses.
- Promote eConsult to patients and the general public to encourage their providers to use the service.