

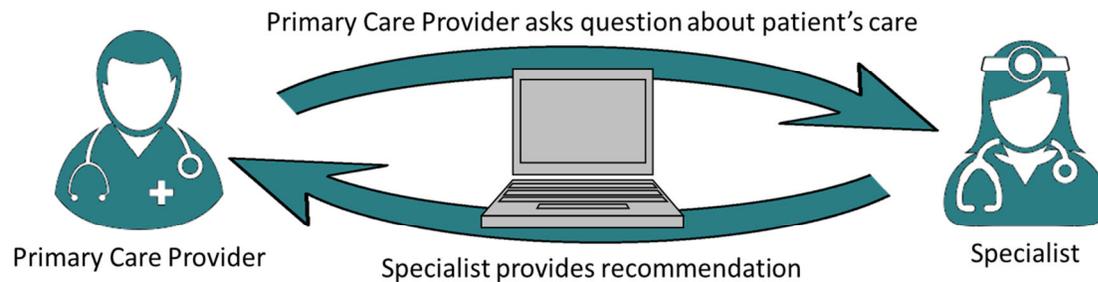
Interjurisdictional licensing of eConsult services

Position Statement

Clear interjurisdictional licensing agreements are needed to clarify rules regarding providers' ability to offer care advice for patients outside of their province/territory. Such agreements would maximize eConsult's ability to improve access to care for patients in remote or rural regions.

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.



The importance of interjurisdictional licensing

As an online platform, eConsult connects PCPs and specialists regardless of their geographic distance. However, ambiguity over licensing means that providers in one province/territory face barriers in accessing advice from providers in a different jurisdiction. This limits eConsult's ability to improve access for patients in less populous regions, who may need to travel thousands of kilometers for specialist care.

Recommendations

To support interjurisdictional eConsults and ensure patients across Canada receive equitable access to prompt specialist advice, several key objectives should be met:

- Identify and build on existing interjurisdictional agreements enabling providers to treat patients outside of their jurisdiction, which can provide a useful template for broader implementation of eConsult services (see Figure).
- To avoid redundancies in licensing across multiple provinces, consider creating a distinct "virtual license" that would operate as a separate jurisdiction. Providers across Canada could seek licensing from this body in addition to their home province. A college from a more populous province could oversee this virtual jurisdiction.
- Establish clear accountability guidelines for advice given through eConsult. Specialists should ultimately be accountable for the advice they give, regardless of how that advice is delivered. Existing policies for hallway/telephone consults can provide a helpful guide.
- Work with colleges to streamline the process. Create a working group of officials from multiple colleges and organizations (e.g. Canadian Medical Protective Association).

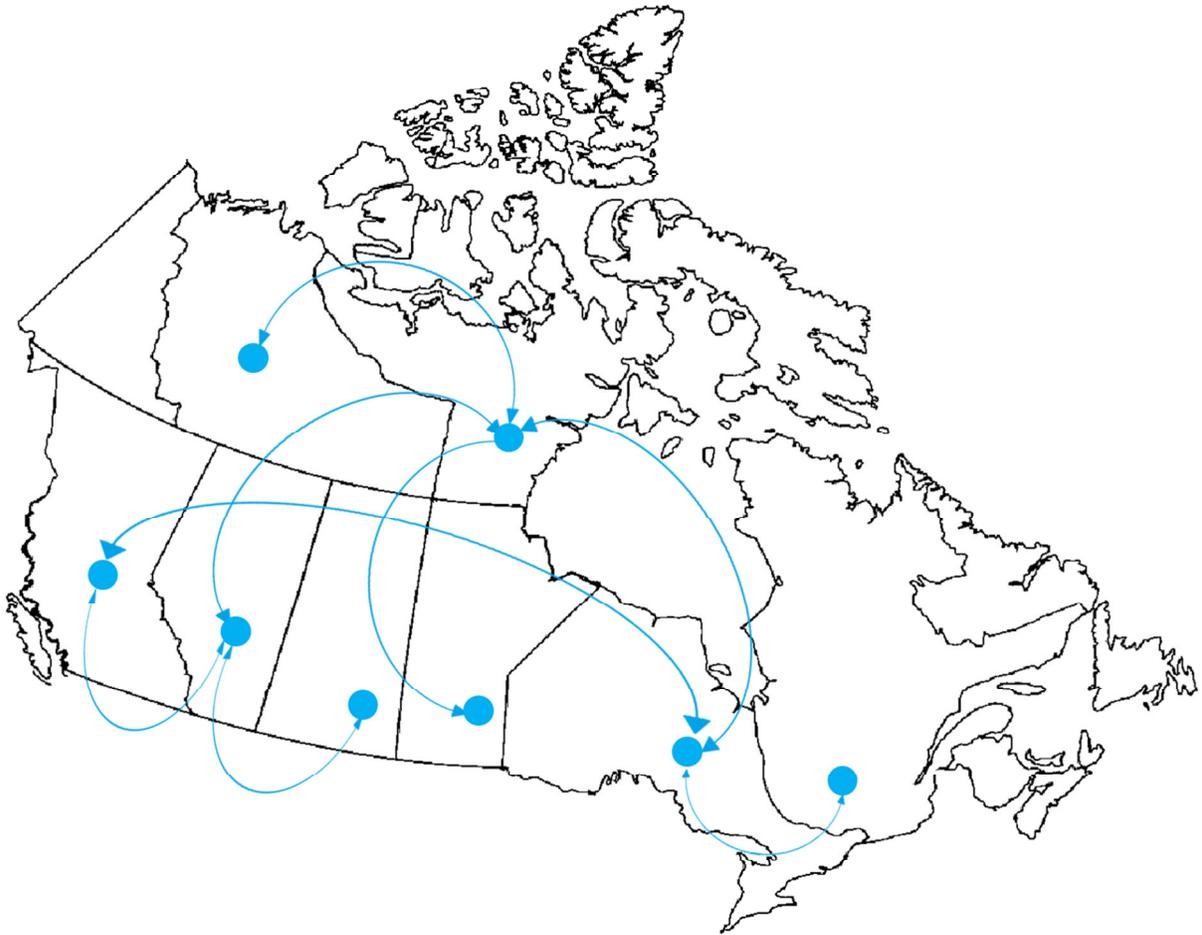


Figure: Existing interjurisdictional licensing agreements between provinces/territories