

Limited access to specialist care remains a major barrier to health care in Canada. The consultation-referral process is complex and involves many factors that can limit the effectiveness and efficiency of patient care. These include:

- Long wait times before specialist advice is received/implemented
- Discovering during the visit that preliminary tests should have been ordered, requiring a second visit
- Discovering during the visit that patient issues are better suited to a different type of specialist
- Delayed communication
- Logistical challenges and expenses for the patients.

The **Champlain BASE Project\*** (**Building Access to Specialists through eConsultation**), or **eConsult**, is a secure, web-based tool that allows primary care providers quick access to speciality care for their patients, often avoiding the need for the patient to be referred for a face-to-face visit. Through eConsult, a primary care provider (PCP) can submit a non-urgent, patient-specific question to a participating speciality. The request is processed and assigned to an appropriate specialist, who is asked to respond within 7 days (average time to response = 2 days).

Depending on the individual request, and using the web-based tool, the specialist may be able to:

- ✓ Provide the PCP with patient-specific advice in place of a face-to-face specialist consultation;
- ✓ Request additional information before being able to provide advice; and/or
- ✓ Recommend a formal referral, in which case any additional diagnostic tests, courses for treatment, etc., may be requested and completed before the appointment, leading to a more effective specialist visit.



\* The Champlain BASE eConsult service was developed in the Champlain region by family physician/researcher Dr. Clare Liddy and endocrinologist Erin Keely in collaboration with the Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), Bruyère Research Institute, Bruyère Continuing Care, The Ottawa Hospital and the Winchester District Memorial Hospital.

### Participating Specialties (as of December 2017) † includes community-specific specialties

Addictions	• Medications (Deprescribing)	Palliative Care	• Thoracic
Assessment/Treatment Services	• Mobility (Falls and Near Falls)	Parkinson Patient Care	Pediatrics:
Adolescent Medicine	Gynecology	Coordination	• ADHD
Allergy & Clinical Immunology	Hematology	Psychiatry†	• Anesthesiology
Anesthesiology (Adult)†	• Hemostasis	▪ First Episode Psychosis	• Cardiology
Back & Neck (Spine Care)†	Infectious Diseases:	Psychiatry-Perinatal	• Chronic Pain
Bariatric Care:	• Viral Hepatitis	Public Health – Ottawa	• Complex Care
• Dietician	Internal medicine	Radiation/Radiotherapy Injury	• Concussion
• Medical	Musculoskeletal Rehab†	Refugee and Immigrant Health	• Dermatology
• Surgical	Nephrology†	(Adult)	• Endocrinology
Cancer Genetics	Neurology:	Respirology	+ Obesity and Diabetes
Cancer Screening	• Migraine	Rheumatology†	• ENT
Cancer Survivorship	• Parkinson Patient Care	Sexual Assault / Domestic	• General†
Cardiology†	Coordination	Violence	• Hematology / Oncology
CCAC – Champlain	• Parkinsons and Movement	Spinal Surgery	• HIV
Chiropody	Disorders	Sports Medicine	• Infectious Disease
Clinical Pharmacy	• Epilepsy	Thoracic Surgery	• Nephrology
Concussion-Rehabilitation	• Dementia and Cognitive	Thrombosis	• Neurology
Dermatology	Neurology	Transgender Care	• Ophthalmology
• Hair Loss	• Multiple Sclerosis	Urogynecology	• Orthopaedics
Diabetes Education	Neurosurgery	Urology	• Palliative Care
Endocrinology†	Obstetrics	Vascular Surgery	• Psychiatry
ENT & Head / Neck Surgery	Obstetrics and Gynecology:	Wound Care	• Refugee and Immigrant Health
Gastroenterology	• Menopause/Perimenopause	Radiology:	• Respirology
Genetics	• Vulvo-vaginal disease	• Abdominal	• Rheumatology
General Surgery	• Urogynecology	• Breast	• Urology
Geriatrics†	Ophthalmology	• Muskuloskeletal	HIV:
• Mind (Dementia, Delirium)	Orthopaedics†	• NeuroRadiology	• Specialists
	Pain Medicinet		• Pharmacist
	Pain & Addictions - Opioids		• Social Worker

## Benefits for the Primary Care Provider

- Receive answers quickly to non-urgent questions (average time to response = 2 days), often avoiding the need for the patient to be referred for a face-to-face visit
- Provides information targeted to the patient, providing better care
- If a face-to-face referral is needed, any additional diagnostic tests, courses for treatment, etc., may be requested and completed before the appointment, leading to a more effective specialist visit
- Provides access to over 107 specialty services
- Responsive to the needs of the primary care provider.

**“Thanks very much to the cardiologist for the clear answers and great explanations/interpretations of her symptoms and diagnostic testing! It’s great learning for me (the PCP) and it saves the patient from having to go out to a specialist appointment.”**

- PCP Provider, Ottawa, 2014

## By the Numbers

Since it began in 2010, the eConsult project has been collecting important information about the service. The following statistics are as of December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017:

	<b>33,327</b>	The number of eConsults cases that have been completed.
<b>Avoiding Unnecessary Referrals</b>	<b>13,332</b>	The number of patients who received specialist advice and avoided an unnecessary trip to a specialist office, thereby also reducing the number of patients added to waitlists.
	<b>40%</b>	The percentage of unnecessary specialist referrals that have been avoided as a result of eConsult. [In fact, only 28% of all eConsult cases led to a referral.]
	<b>1355</b>	The number of family physicians (1160) and nurse practitioners (195) using eConsult, primarily in one region (the Champlain Local Health Integration Network), representing more than 50% of all primary care providers.
<b>Service Experience</b>	<b>107</b>	The number of specialty groups available for providing advice to primary care providers. This represents the <b>largest</b> number of specialty groups available through an eConsultation service in <b>the world</b> .
	<b>2 days</b>	The average response time from the moment the eConsult is sent to the time the first specialist response is given. The fastest response time was <b>2 minutes!</b>
	<b>92%</b>	The proportion of cases rated by the primary care provider as providing very good or excellent value for their patient.
	<b>57%</b>	The percentage of cases for which primary care provider received good advice for a new or additional course of action they had not considered.
<b>Improving Specialist Visits</b>	<b>24%</b>	The percentage of patients who needed to see a specialist in person, but that specialist visit was likely more effective due to the eConsult advice.

For more information, and/or if you are interested in gaining access to the eConsult service, please phone Amir Afkham (Senior Project Manager) at 613.747.3235, or Marnie Reiche (eConsultation Operation Support) at 613.747.3258, or email [econsultsupport@lhinworks.on.ca](mailto:econsultsupport@lhinworks.on.ca).