

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

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addictions Assessment/Treatment Services Adolescent Medicine Allergy & Clinical Immunology Anesthesiology (Adult)† Back & Neck (Spine Care)† Bariatric Care: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dietician • Medical • Surgical Cancer Genetics Cancer Screening Cancer Survivorship Cardiology† CCAC – Champlain Chiropody Clinical Pharmacy Concussion-Rehabilitation Dermatology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hair Loss Diabetes Education Endocrinology† ENT & Head / Neck Surgery Gastroenterology Genetics General Surgery Geriatrics† <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mind (Dementia, Delirium) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medications (Deprescribing) • Mobility (Falls and Near Falls) Gynecology Hematology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemostasis Infectious Diseases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viral Hepatitis Internal medicine Musculoskeletal Rehab† Nephrology† Neurology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migraine • Parkinson Patient Care • Coordination • Parkinsons and Movement Disorders • Epilepsy • Dementia and Cognitive Neurology • Multiple Sclerosis Neurosurgery Obstetrics Obstetrics and Gynecology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menopause/Perimenopause • Vulvo-vaginal disease • Urogynecology Ophthalmology Orthopaedics† Pain Medicinet Pain & Addictions - Opioids | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Palliative Care Parkinson Patient Care Coordination Psychiatry† <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Episode Psychosis Psychiatry-Perinatal Public Health – Ottawa Radiation/Radiotherapy Injury Refugee and Immigrant Health (Adult) Respirology Rheumatology† Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Spinal Surgery Sports Medicine Thoracic Surgery Thrombosis Transgender Care Urogynecology Urology Vascular Surgery Wound Care Radiology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abdominal • Breast • Musculoskeletal • NeuroRadiology | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoracic Pediatrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADHD • Anesthesiology • Cardiology • Chronic Pain • Complex Care • Concussion • Dermatology • Endocrinology + Obesity and Diabetes • ENT • General† • Hematology / Oncology • HIV • Infectious Disease • Nephrology • Neurology • Ophthalmology • Orthopaedics • Palliative Care • Psychiatry • Refugee and Immigrant Health • Respirology • Rheumatology • Urology HIV: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialists • Pharmacist • 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 31st, 2017:

	33,327	The number of eConsults cases that have been completed.
Avoiding Unnecessary Referrals	13,332	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.
	40%	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.]
	1355	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.
Service Experience	107	The number of specialty groups available for providing advice to primary care providers. This represents the largest number of specialty groups available through an eConsultation service in the world .
	2 days	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 2 minutes!
	92%	The proportion of cases rated by the primary care provider as providing very good or excellent value for their patient.
	57%	The percentage of cases for which primary care provider received good advice for a new or additional course of action they had not considered.
Improving Specialist Visits	24%	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.