

Frequently Asked Questions

What is eConsult?

eConsult is an electronic communication between a primary care provider and a specialist. An eConsult occurs when a primary care provider sends a patient specific, non-urgent request for advice to a specialist on a secure web-based platform (eHealthNB). eConsult provides advice to the primary care providers, who continues to manage the patient's care. It may result in a patient not needing a face-to-face consult with the specialist. If a face-to-face consult is required, the referral for this consultation would proceed in the usual manner that is followed in your area.

How does it work?

The primary care provider accesses the EHR, creates an eConsult request, describes the question, attaches any pertinent documents/images and submits the request electronically. The eConsult is then assigned to the consulting specialist.

The specialist receives a notification that an eConsult requires their attention and accesses eHealth NB, reviews the consult, and sends the response back to the referring primary care provider.

The primary care provider receives a notification that the eConsult has been answered. They can read and download or print the response to the eConsult in a PDF format so that it can be included into the patient's medical record.

The eConsult remains on the electronic health record (eHealthNB) but and is only visible to the referring primary care provider and the specialist who responded to it.

What specialties are currently involved in eConsult?

There are currently 11 specialties available for eConsult: Chronic Pain Management, Dermatology, Geriatric Medicine, Neurology, Obstetrics/Gynecology, Orthopedic Surgery, Psychiatry, Pediatrics, Opioid Addiction Management, Gastroenterology, and Endocrinology/Metabolism.

Privacy

A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) was completed on eConsult in April 2018 and signed by:

- Executive Director of eHealthNB
- Executive Director of Acute Care and NB Cancer Network
- Director of Health Applications
- Chief Privacy Officer
- Departmental Information Security Officer.



Where else has eConsult successfully been done?

The largest Canadian example is the Champlain BASE eConsult service. This eConsult service has been in place since 2010 and has responded to over 30,000 queries. Data collection from BASE has demonstrated over 8,000 referrals for face to face appointments have been avoided by using eConsult. www.champlainbaseconsult.com.

Information about this initiative

New Brunswick was one of 11 teams across Canada who participated with the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement's 15 month quality improvement collaborative: Connected medicine – Enhancing Primary Care Access to Specialist Consult. The collaborative started in June 2017, and NB's eConsult went live in May 2018.

The results of the *proof of concept* were very positive, with 93 eConsults submitted between May 7–October 31, 2018. The average response time was 3.6 days, with 50% of eConsults being responded to in under 1.5 days. Family physician and specialist satisfaction was high and access to specialists improved. It resulted in a reduction in the number of referrals sent to specialists for face-to-face consultation. The eConsult initiative was successful in bringing together the right stakeholders that allowed for the engagement of physicians (family physicians and specialists), developing a user-friendly eConsult platform embedded in the provincial electronic health record (EHR), increasing access to specialists for non-urgent patients consults, decreasing the number of face-to-face referrals sent to specialists and allowed for the development of the technology of the EHR to expand to an interactive platform.

Post *proof of concept*, the initiative has expanded to include new specialties and access for Nurse Practitioners.

For more information on eConsult

Please contact eConsult@gnb.ca