

CMPA Assessment of eConsult

eConsult NB was developed by the Department of Health in collaboration with Horizon and Vitalité Health Networks, the New Brunswick Medical Society, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New Brunswick, and the New Brunswick College of Family Physicians. The eConsult project was supported by the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement.

What is an eConsult?

An eConsult is an electronic communication between a primary care provider and specialist on a secure, web-based platform. In New Brunswick, eConsults occur within the provincial electronic health record – eHealthNB, and are for non-urgent patient specific questions. It can be a simple question (e.g., about a drug dosage) or a more complex question following an initial assessment by the PCP (e.g., sending a question with images of the patient to dermatology).



Image courtesy of OntarioMD

How is an eConsult different from an informal consultation?

In many hospitals, when a PCP has a question about a patient, they are able to approach a colleague and ask for advice. These “hallway consultations” happen frequently and though the PCP often gets the advice needed, there is no audit trail of the consultation. There is also no way for the specialist to get paid.

What is the CMPA’s position on PCPs and specialists using eConsult to provide patient care?

The CMPA has assessed the eConsult flow of care and determined that it provides an opportunity to improve efficiency, enhance patient care, expand access to specialists and provides a clear audit trail of the specialist’s advice given to the PCP for the suggested care of the patient.

Who is the Most Responsible Physician (MRP) during an eConsult?

When using the eConsult service, the PCP remains the MRP for the patient, i.e., when a specialist accepts an eConsult, it does not transfer the responsibility of care to the specialist as is the case with a normal referral.

Suggested reading:

CMPA - Is that eConsultation or eReferral service right for your medical practice?

<https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2017/is-that-econsultation-or-ereferral-service-right-for-your-medical-practice>

Physicians are encouraged to contact the CMPA with any specific liability concerns they might have.