Matching Policy to Innovation: The Champlain BASE eConsult Service

2016 eHealth Conference, June 7

Clare Liddy, MD, MSc
CT Lamont Primary Care Research Centre, Bruyère Research Institute

Amir Afkham, BSc
Champlain Local Health Integration Network

Erin Keely, MD
The Ottawa Hospital
Disclosure of Commercial Support

This program has not received financial support from commercial interests.

Potential for conflict(s) of interest: none
The eConsult Team

A collaboration between:
• The Champlain Local Health Integration Network
• The Ottawa Hospital
• Bruyère Research Institute
• Winchester District Memorial

Service Funding
• Champlain Local Health Integration Network
• Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care

Current Research Funding
• Canadian Institutes of Health Research
• Bruyère Research Institute

Clare Liddy
Primary Care Lead
ciddy@bruyere.org
613-562-6262, Ext. 2928

Erin Keely
Specialist Lead
ekeely@toh.on.ca
613-738-8400, Ext. 81941

Amir Afkham
Engagement & Implementation Lead
Amir.Afkham@lhins.on.ca
613-747-3235
Overview

- Problems in accessing specialist care in Ontario
- Champlain BASE eConsult service overview
- Policies influencing eConsult uptake
- Next steps
7 in 10 primary care doctors in Canada say their patients often experience long wait times to see a specialist (Figure 1), the highest proportion of all 10 countries in the Commonwealth Fund 2015 Survey.
Barriers to Access

- Patient referred to specialist
- Patient has specialist visit
- Challenges in scheduling/travel
- Unnecessary testing
- Duplication of tests/procedures
- Poor care coordination
- Patient begins treatment
- Patient follow-up appointments

Excessive wait times (median 87 days)
Champlain BASE* eConsult service improves access to specialist care

• A secure web-based service for primary care providers to access specialist care for their patients

*I LOVE eConsult!!!! Great way to get fast information on your patients and often to avoid referral if not indicated.*
A Solution: eConsult

- Patient referred to specialist
- Patient has specialist visit
- Patient begins treatment
- Patient follow-up appointments

*Building Access to Specialists through eConsultation | © Bruyère Research Institute, Champlain LHIN, The Ottawa Hospital, Winchester District Memorial Hospital*
How Does eConsult Work?

PCP logs onto secure webpage

Completes simple form to submit to a “specialty”

Assigns to an appropriate specialist (availability/rotation)

Response received within 7 days; back and forth communication can occur between PCP and specialist

PCP closes eConsult and completes survey
A look at the numbers

- 14,395 cases completed*
- 1,030 PCPs (879 MDs and 160 NPs) from 397 clinics in 92 towns/cities have joined the service
- 86 specialty groups available

*As of April 30, 2016
A look at the numbers

- Specialists responded to eConsults in a median of 0.8 days (Improved access)
- Over 60% of cases did not require a face-to-face specialist visit (efficient, coordinated care)
- In 4% of cases, eConsult prompted a medical referral

1. Referral was originally contemplated but now avoided at this stage
2. Referral was originally contemplated and is still needed - this eConsult likely leads to a more effective visit
3. Referral was not originally contemplated and is still not needed - this eConsult provided useful feedback/information
4. Referral was not originally contemplated, but eConsult process resulted in a referral being initiated
5. There was no particular benefit to using eConsult in this case
6. Other (please comment)
Patient Experience

- Patient response to service is overwhelmingly positive
- Patients appreciate eConsult’s impact on access, care quality, and continuity of care ¹

Do you think that the eConsult service was useful in your situation?

Do you think that the eConsult service is an acceptable way to access specialist advice?

Do you think that the eConsult service is an acceptable alternative to face-to-face…

Would you ask your PCP to use the eConsult service on your behalf in the future?

1Telephone interview conducted with 30 patients treated using the eConsult service. Final results to be published.
Matching policy to innovation
Leveraging six years of implementation experience, our team explored policy areas that could be improved to foster development of similar innovations.

Our team identified three areas where current policy (or lack thereof) affects eConsult’s potential impact:

1) Privacy
2) Financing
3) Delivery of Services
Access to Specialist Consult eCollaborative

Community of Practice:

- Enrolled Teams
- Auditing Teams
- “Peer Coach” Teams

Map showing various health centers and organizations across Canada, including:
- NWT Department of Health & Social Services
- Providence Health Care
- Alberta Health Services
- Saskatchewan Ministry of Health
- Manitoba e-Health
- McGill University Health Centre
- Women’s College Hospital, Toronto Central LHIN, Ontario Telemedicine Network
- Independent Health, New York USA
- MonMedical, London UK
- Health PEI
- ACCESS-MH (Atlantic Canada Children’s Effective Service Strategies)
Privacy

Issue: Concerns over privacy remain a barrier to the adoption of electronic platforms or innovations among health care providers

• Provinces have created/adopted privacy legislation to protect patients
• eConsult meets all privacy requirements outlined by PHIPA
• Despite robust legislation, anxiety over electronic services remains at policymaker level (patients less concerned\(^1\))

Suggestion: Clearer guidelines on how new technologies can fit into existing privacy policies would help innovators develop secure programs.

\(^1\)Telephone interview conducted with 30 patients treated using the eConsult service. Final results to be published.
Financing

**Issue: Standard payment models may not be applicable to eConsult**

- eConsult remunerates specialists at $200/hour prorated (88% of specialists support this funding model\(^1\))
- The service is supported by a combination of regional/provincial funding and research grants
- Negotiations to develop an eConsult fee code in Ontario have been longstanding and complex

**Suggestion: Establishing an eConsult payment model would improve the service’s sustainability**

Delivery of Services

Issue: Ambiguities in the specialist’s role could create challenges in the service’s expansion

- Service policies must be established to define what constitutes a specialty (e.g. social workers, chiropractors)
- Specialist selection criteria determined by patient need
- Duty of care and circle of care must be clearly articulated to all participants
- Provincial certification limits capacity for interjurisdictional consultation; policies on eConsult are unclear

Suggestion: A clear policy supporting interjurisdictional eConsults could greatly improve access to specialists for patients in remote provinces/territories
PCPs and their patients will have equitable access to specialist advice through eConsults

Each region in Canada will have access to an eConsult service

**Goal**

Program management, leadership, quality assurance

Technology platform: OTN, SharePoint, other regional platforms

National Partnerships: RCPSC, CHI, CFHI, CFPC, CAN, CPSI, CMPA

**BASE Model and Vision**

**Operations**
- Registration
- Funding
- Payment model

**Engagement**
- Regional clinical champions
- Key organizations
- LHIN leaders

**Model of Delivery**
- Population-based
- Addresses regional gaps in specialist access
- Primary care led

**Quality Assurance**
- Metrics
- Leadership
- Auditing
- Comparison to other regions

**Workflow**
- Efficient
- Integrated into referral workflow
- Support integration into EMR

**Education**
- Leverage eConsult to build capacity in region through CPD
- Enhances specialist-PCP relationship

*Building Access to Specialists through eConsultation | © Bruyère Research Institute, Champlain LHIN, The Ottawa Hospital, Winchester District Memorial Hospital*
Our Collaborations

International eConsult Collaborative Network of researchers and knowledge users from Canada and from US (UCSF, MAYO, VA)

National Organizations:
- College of Family Physicians of Canada
- Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement
- Canadian Medical Protective Association
- Canadian Patient Safety Institute
- Canadian Nurses Association
- Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons
- Canada Health Infoway

Provincial Organizations
- Health Quality Ontario
- MOHLTC
- Québec College of Family Physicians
Questions for Discussion

• What concerns pertaining to patient privacy could impact the implementation of eHealth interventions such as the eConsult service?

• How can discrepancies in different regions’ policies on electronic consultation be overcome to support interjurisdictional eConsults?

• What policies could be put in place to sufficiently compensate providers while providing a sustainable source of funding for eConsult services?
Thank You!

For more information, check out our eBook

Available in ibook (for Mac) and pdf (for PC) from www.ChamplainBASEeConsult.ca
The Evidence Base for Champlain BASE

Better Population Health
1) Building Access to Specialist Care through E-Consultation. Open Med 2013
http://www.openmedicine.ca/article/view/551
2) Utilization, Benefits and Impact of an e-Consultation Service across Diverse Specialties and Primary Care Providers. Telemed J eHealth 2013
3) Improving access to chronic pain services through eConsultation: A cross-sectional study of the Champlain BASE eConsult service. Pain Medicine 2016
http://painmedicine.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/04/02/pm.pn w038
4) Rationale and model for integrating the pharmacist into the outpatient referral-consultation process. Can Fam Physician 2016
http://www.cfp.ca/content/62/2/111?etoc

Improved Provider Experience
http://www.jabfm.org/content/28/3/394.full
10) Perspectives of Champlain BASE Specialist Physicians: their experiences and recommendations for expanding eConsult services across Ontario. Stud Health Technol Inform 2015
http://ebooks.iospress.nl/publication/39209
12) Harnessing eConsultations to Improve Practice-Based Learning in Endocrinology. Can J Diabetes 2015

Lower Costs
7) What are the costs of improving access to specialists through eConsultation? The Champlain BASE experience. Stud Health Technol Inform 2015 http://ebooks.iospress.nl/volumearticle/39213

Exploring Policy/Implementation Issues
13) Ten Steps to Establishing an e-Consultation Service to Improve Access to Specialist Care. Telemed J eHealth 2013
http://ebooks.iospress.nl/volumearticle/39214