

CMPA Assessment of eConsult

What is an eConsult?

An eConsult occurs when a primary care provider (PCP) electronically sends a question to a specialist. This 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 for a virtual dermatology assessment). eConsults may avoid the need to refer a patient to a specialist for diagnosis and treatment.



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.

What are the liability considerations for the PCP?

The PCP holds the duty of care to proceed with the eConsult and move the closed eConsult interaction into the patient record.

What are the liability considerations for the specialist?

Similar to the advice given to a PCP through “hallway consultations”, specialists are accountable for any advice given via eConsult for patient care. eConsult provides a clear audit trail linking the specialist advice to the PCP and is subsequently documented in the patient’s record.

Further questions please email eConsult@ontariomd.com