
E-Consult Toolkit

NEWS **March 2019**

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Adoption

At Massachusetts General Hospital, 1 in 10 Cardiology Consults are E-Consults

At Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), e-consult is playing an important role in optimizing the cardiology team's patient care. "There's a lot of problems with a specialist-primary care provider interface, nationally. Not every clinical question requires the patient to come in for a physical exam and history from a cardiologist. It's not consistent with our clinical best practices," Jason H. Wasfy, MD, MGH's director of Quality & Analytics, said in an interview with [MD Magazine](#) at the American College of Cardiology's Annual Meeting.

To address this issue, MGH [piloted cardiology e-consults 2014](#), and since then Wasfy says MGH has seen a "huge growth" in e-consult use. "When a primary care doctor has a question about cardiology, in about 10% of cases, there's an exchange of information and documentation...without the patient having to go to

the doctor," he notes.

E-Consults Bring Mayo Clinic Expertise to Patients in Topeka, Kansas

For five years, Stormont Vail Health has partnered with the Mayo Clinic Network to provide patients in the Topeka, Kansas-based health system with access to quality specialist care. During this five year partnership, Stormont Vail providers have submitted 1,100 e-consults to over 4,000 Mayo specialists and subspecialists.

In a [local news report](#), a patient named David Strum talked about how e-consult access to Mayo specialists impacted treatment of his Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. Strum explained that, based on the Mayo's input, he underwent a less aggressive treatment that has not "had a huge impact on my everyday life."



My Stormont Story

I have used eConsults with Mayo many times – and it has given reassurance that we are on the right track and pursuing the best treatment. It provides a great peace of mind on difficult cases.

Susan Brian M.D.
Stormont Vail Health

Based on this kind of patient success, both Stormont Vail and Mayo are working to expand the use of e-consults to deliver Mayo's specialist care to more patients.

Cost Effectiveness

California Community Clinic Estimates E-Consult Savings of \$1.8 Million in Referral Fees for 2018

California-based Vista Community Clinic has estimated savings of \$1.8 million in referral fees through the use of e-consult in 2018, reports [Healthcare IT News](#). "We can estimate the total annual referral costs saved are



\$2,019,600 based on 1,800 e-consults replacing a visit, and this number is growing every day. Our total program savings – 1,800 e-consults at the current e-consult fee – equate to \$1,794,600," explained Dr. Kevin Ronan, a pediatrician and Vista's manager of quality assurance.

Vista, which is both a FQHC and NCQA-certified patient-centered medical home, provides care for safety net patients through eight locations in San Diego, Riverside, and Orange Counties. In 2018, 1,800 e-consults submitted by its primary care providers replaced specialist visits.

"[E-consults] are the perfect answer to every hard-working, under-resourced primary care clinic whose clinicians seek a little guidance and whose patients benefit from one fewer trip to an unfamiliar office...[I]t is a comfort to have telemedicine in my back pocket," said Ronan. Ultimately, Vista's use of e-consult pays for itself both monetarily and in patient and provider satisfaction, he concluded.

Quality

Study: 82% of Primary Care Providers Adhere to Specialist E-Consult Recommendations and 79% Communicate Them to Patients

The extent to which primary care providers (PCP) follow specialist recommendations from e-consults is critical to e-consult impact on patient care. A recent study conducted a [retrospective analysis](#) of 291 e-consults to understand both adherence levels among PCPs as well as how PCPs communicated specialist information to patients.

The study found that in 82% of cases primary care clinicians adhered to specialist advice. In addition, 79% of PCPs communicated the results of an e-consult to the patient. Most conducted this communication during a face-to-face visit (38%), while others phoned patients (32%) or had nurses call their patients (19%). Only 9% used email via patient portals.

The study authors conclude that e-consult recommendations from specialists are “actionable” and “deliver good-quality care and improve patient management.” In addition, the majority of PCPs connect with patients

themselves after an e-consult to communicate results and recommendations in a timely manner.

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