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E-Consult Toolkit

**NEWS
March 2018**

Faster access to high-quality specialty care. E-consult delivers. Here's how.

Toolkit of Best Practices and Implementation Tools Now Online

For decades, California's safety net payers, providers and advocates have grappled with the challenge of access to specialty care. E-consult provides a potential solution to this problem. Asynchronous communications between primary care providers and specialists are already in use by leading programs including Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital, Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, Alameda Health System, San Mateo Medical Center and Community Health Partnership of Santa Clara County.

These e-consult implementations have delivered the following benefits:

- Triage of patient referrals via e-consult in less than 24 hours (Santa Clara County)
- 25 percent of patient referrals resolved via e-consult without requiring face-to-face visits (Los Angeles County of Department of Health Services)
- 43 percent decrease in average wait times for face-to-face specialist visits from 112 days to 49 days (San Francisco Health Network)

Implementing E-Consult





How did they do it? Find out with [E-Consult Toolkit](#), a Blue Shield of California Foundation-funded collection of tools, templates, best practices, case studies and research developed by payers, providers and researchers from across the country that have used e-consult to improve delivery of specialty care to safety net patients.

The E-Consult Toolkit supports the four phases of executing e-consult: assessing readiness, planning, implementation and scaling and evaluation.

Readiness: Obtaining stakeholder agreement and refining referral processes before implementing e-consult

Planning: Defining resource needs, timelines, communications, vendor selection and payment

Implementation and Scale: Moving from pilot to launch to scale

Evaluation: Measuring e-consult quality and efficiency and assessing patient and provider satisfaction

E-Consult News

New Study Explores Provider E-Consult Adoption

Provider Perception Impacts E-Consult Adoption

A new study (Health Affairs, February 2018) of e-consult adoption variability across anesthesiology departments in the Veterans Affairs New England Healthcare System shows how provider perception impacts e-consult adoption.

While e-consult use for pre-operative assessments increased from 103 e-consults sent in 2012 to 5,023 sent in 2015, adoption at individual sites varied significantly. Clinician interviews revealed that those at sites with higher use rates perceived that e-consult made workflow more efficient, while those at sites with less use clinicians

e-consult made workflows more efficient, while those at sites with less use clinicians said they preferred in-person consultations.

"The adoption of innovations depends a lot on the perceptions of stakeholders," noted author study Melissa Afable, a project manager in Partners HealthCare System's department of quality, safety and value.

Despite clinician hesitance, the study concludes: "The increasing adoption of e-consultation in healthcare systems and e-consults' promise for improving access while controlling costs under new payment models make e-consults an attractive intervention." [Read more](#).

CHCF Addresses California Law Makers on Methods for Improving Medi-Cal Access

Telehealth and E-Consult Can Improve Access

On January 17th, Chris Perrone director of improving access of the California Health Care Foundation (CHCF), [addressed the Assembly Select Committee on Health Care Delivery Systems and Universal Coverage on improving Medi-Cal access](#). With 13 million Californians now covered by Medi-Cal, access to care is becoming a key issue. At the conclusion of his address, Perrone provided a list of methods for improving access, which included telehealth and e-consult:

"Encourage plans to expand access to telehealth. Public health care systems in San Francisco and Los Angeles have used electronic referral and consultation systems to reduce unnecessary visits to specialists and cut months off appointment wait times. Similarly, telehealth is connecting rural and urban providers with specialists practicing in other parts of the state. A few health plans are investing in telehealth, but there is great room for improvement. Any plan serving rural areas or receiving an exemption from Medi-Cal's network adequacy or timely access requirements should have a robust telehealth program in place."

E-Consult Implementations at Alameda Health System and Santa Clara County Improve Patient Care and Provider Collaboration

E-consult implementations at Alameda Health System and Santa Clara County have

delivered multiple benefits to both providers and patients. In addition to speeding access to specialists and delivering better care to patients, e-consult builds a strong culture of collaboration between primary care providers and specialists. Read more about these implementations at [E-Consult Toolkit Case Studies](#).

The E-Consult Toolkit and monthly E-Consult News updates are a project of Blue Shield of California Foundation.

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