E-Consult *Toolkit*

NEWS
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Primary Care Provider Satisfaction

New Research on Primary Care Providers' Satisfaction with E-Consult Highlights Where Support is Needed

An extensive survey of primary care providers (PCP) brings to light both the success and challenges of e-consult implementation and uncovers broader insight into the expectations, workflow changes, and problems that emerge when adopting new health information technology. The study, published in JAMA Internal Medicine's April issue, concludes that e-consult's transformative delivery innovation requires support for PCPs, and offers a checklist of recommendations for implementation planning.

Authors of invited commentary, including Scott Shipman, MD, MPH and director of primary care affairs at the Association of American Medical Colleges, shared results of a previous survey on PCP satisfaction with e-consult with positive results. Authors note that "providing dedicated time for non–face-to-face care activities (inclusive of e-consults) and/or recognizing the clinical effort involved in carrying out the specialists' advice after an e-consult through an appropriate reimbursement or credit may support PCP adoption and satisfaction."

In a set of suggested steps on how to implement e-consult without adding frustration and professional burnout, the commentary authors provide the following guidance:

- Identify and eliminate low-value tasks to free PCP time for new, higher-value activities
- Ensure that e-consult's technology user interface doesn't increase frustration

- Provide dedicated time for non-face-to-face care activities and to carry out activities recommended by specialists through e-consult

Overall, systems considering adopting e-consult have both "reason for optimism" regarding its value and support for careful planning to implement change for the fundamental role of speciality referrals in primary care.

Case Study

E-Consult Snapshot: UC Davis

For UC Davis's primary care networks, including 15 clinical sites as well as hospital-based clinics, e-consult is embedded in EPIC and integrated into primary care provider workflow. Response time from the program's 22 pediatric and adult care sub-specialties is less than 24 hours. In addition to improving access, e-consult transforms relationships between providers and enables the creation of patient-centered "health homes."

"E-consult shifts the relationship between specialists and primary care providers and supports a person-centered health home. For our organization, e-consult is a strategy to facilitate access and relationships between providers,"
Jana Katz Bell, Assistant Dean, UC Davis School of Medicine and Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.

Optimization

Recommendations to Optimize E-Consult for Psychiatric Care and Advice

Some of the longest specialist wait times are in psychiatry. A recent study concludes that e-consult is a viable and timely way for PCPs to get much-needed psychiatric advice, particularly for medication management. Among the e-consults, 81% were answered within 24 hours, and 65% (24/37) were addressed in a single exchange.

From interviews that explored PCP perceptions about the uses and barriers of psychiatry e-consult and the quantitative findings, researchers developed recommendations to optimize utility and uptake. These recommendations include the following:

- PCPs new to practice and from rural areas may be more receptive to psychiatric e-consult, but not exclusively because long wait times for specialist care are universal.
- Regarding mental health care for which community services and social determinants of health are important, e-consult psychiatrists must be either familiar or have relationships with the communities and the providers patients consult to.
- Due to the nuances of the psychiatric care, e-consult should be integrated with other psychiatric services including telephone consultation, in-person or telehealth face-to-face assessment and other ongoing collaborative communications methods.

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