

E-Consult News

April 2020

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Telehealth Funding Opportunities Can Support E-Consult for Pandemic Response

FCC Ready to Vet Applications for \$200M in Telehealth Aid

On April 13th, the FCC will open to grant applications for the \$200 million in telehealth funds Congress allocated as part of the recent [CARES Act](#). "The FCC is moving quickly to distribute this funding to help health care providers and patients across the country during the coronavirus pandemic," Chairman Ajit Pai pledged.

[Guidance](#) for prospective applicants was published on Wednesday April 8th. Additional application details are now live [through the FCC portal](#).

The FCC quickly adopted its Covid-19 Telehealth Program order after President Trump signed the relief measure into law, which promises \$200 million for a variety of health care providers to finance broadband connectivity and devices for telehealth services. The commission will consider applicants on a rolling basis and potentially make hundreds of cash awards and expects to make no individual grants greater than \$1 million.

Blue Shield of California to accelerate \$200 million in payments to California providers



In addition to other measures easing administrative burdens on its contracted providers, Blue Shield of California is offering its providers \$200 million in advance payments to offset revenue lost during the COVID-19 response. "We are arranging hundreds of millions of dollars of support to clinicians and hospitals that are heroically serving Californians on the front lines of this fight," said Paul Markovich, president and CEO of Blue Shield of California. More information is available on the health insurer's [website](#).

UnitedHealthcare Offering \$2B in Accelerated Payments to Providers

To address the short-term financial pressures caused by COVID-19, UnitedHealth Group (NYSE: UNH), through UnitedHealthcare and Optum, has announced immediate payment acceleration and other financial support to health care providers in the U.S. This move applies to United Healthcare's Medicare Advantage and Medicaid businesses.

"We are grateful to the health care providers and their teams who are on the front lines battling COVID-19. The actions we are taking today will provide nearly \$2 billion in accelerated payments and financial support so our care provider partners can focus on delivering needed care," stated UnitedHealth Group Chief Executive Officer David S. Wichmann in a [release](#).

E-Consult Vendors Offering Free Services to Providers in Response to COVID-19

- **Safety Net Connect**, America's Physicians Groups, Gain Health Care and HubMD are offering free access to the E-Consult COVID portal in response to the pandemic. Provider groups can request portal access [here](#).
- **ConferMED** is offering free coronavirus eConsults for primary care providers at safety net practices. More information is available [here](#).
- **RubiconMD** is offering free access to all 120+ specialties for qualifying safety net clinicians during the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information, clinic leadership can visit [here](#) and contact covid19support@rubiconmd.com.



E-Consults Can Help with PPE Conservation

The editors of the Journal of the American Medical Association issued a call for ideas for conserving personal protective equipment, maximizing its use and identifying new sources for supplies. [Published respondents](#) include Sharon Rikin, MD of Montefiore Medical Center whose quote below notes that e-consults are one tool that helps to decrease use of PPE.

"E-consults allow the primary team caring for a patient to request and receive recommendations from specialists without requiring the specialists see the patient in-person. This communication is documented in the medical record similar to a formal consult. While traditionally this has been used in outpatient settings, this model of care can easily be brought inpatient. Substituting e-consults for in-person consults reduces the number of PPE used by specialists. It also has the potential added benefit of reducing spread of COVID-19 by reducing unnecessary contact."

Study Assesses E-Consult Utility Data from Partners HealthCare System

Partners HealthCare System specialists receive e-consults in their Epic inbox and respond within 48 to 72 hours, receiving reimbursement of \$50 from Partners Population Health department. A [study conducted to assess metrics associated with e-consult use and results](#) found:

- Across all specialties, most e-consults were completed within 1 day or less (range: 73.1% for psychiatry to 87.8% for infectious disease).
- From 84 geographic locations, most referring providers were physicians (79.0%) and PCPs (75.8%), and most were affiliated with tertiary care practices (83.2%).
- 70% of e-consults were deemed appropriate based on review of patient records.

The study's authors conclude: "We found high rates of appropriate e-consults across specialties, supporting the hypothesis that e-consults are an efficient care model compared with in-person visits."

Workgroup Sponsors

We invite organizations to sponsor the E-Consult Workgroup and its Annual Workshop on November 16th. For more information about our sponsorship opportunities, view the [program details](#) or contact us at electronic_consult@bluepathhealth.com. Thanks to our initial sponsors below:

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Events

Next E-Consult Workgroup Webinar - May 7th

Please join us for the next E-Consult Workgroup webinar on May 7th, from 12 to 1 p.m. Pacific Time.

- Online access: <https://zoom.us/j/176936318>
- Dial-in access: +16699006833,,176936318#

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