

Frequently Asked Questions

eConsult in Long-Term Care

What is eConsult?

eConsult is a secure web-based tool that allows physicians or nurse practitioners timely access to specialist advice for all patients and long-term care (LTC) residents, often eliminating the need for an in-person specialist visit.

How can eConsult help in long-term care?

- Provide timely access to non-urgent questions (average response time **2 days**)
- Improve care coordination and collaboration between clinicians
- Provide opportunities to enhance learning and manage resident cases within the home
- Avoid unnecessary resident transfers to acute care settings
- Offer an innovative approach to the referral/consultation process
- Address gaps in care for residents unable to travel for specialist visits
- Lower costs and burdens on the home, residents and caregivers

742 residents living in LTC in Ontario had an eConsult sent on their behalf between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2019. eConsult has shown positive impacts in LTC, with providers and caregivers rating it highly and encouraging wide-spread adoption. Of the 407 cases submitted by providers in LTC on the Ontario eConsult Service, 80% were resolved without the need for the resident to attend a face-to-face visit with a specialist. Further, in 56% of cases, providers received advice for a new or additional course of action.

Who are the specialists I will be getting advice from? Are they from my region?

The specialists providing advice are located across the province, including in your region. The goal over the next few years is to expand the number of regions offering Regional BASE™ managed specialty groups. Currently, the BASE™ managed service on the OTNhub (otnhub.ca) offers access to over 93 specialty groups, including dermatology, psychiatry, endocrinology, cardiology, neurology, and hematology.

Do I need to obtain the patient's consent prior to requesting an eConsult?

No, patient consent is implied in an eConsult as this interaction remains within the circle of care; however, advising the patient of your use of this tool is good practice.

Who is the Most Responsible Provider (MRP) during an eConsult?

When using the eConsult service, the primary care provider remains the MRP for the resident, i.e., when a specialist accepts an eConsult, it does not transfer the responsibility of care or decision making to the specialist as may be the case with a traditional referral.

How can I embed eConsult into my current workflow?

eConsult's flexibility allows for individual homes and providers to incorporate the service into their workflow in a manner that minimizes interruption. For instance, physicians and nurse practitioners may not be the ones completing the eConsults directly. Instead, they may choose to delegate this responsibility to an assistant, office administrator or referral clerk, who will generate the eConsult based on EMR data or the clinician's notes.

What about EMR Integration?

An updated EMR specification is available for all OntarioMD certified EMR vendors, as of March 2019. This specification defines the requirements for integrating with the Ontario eConsult Program. The timeline for availability of EMR integration to providers depends on individual EMR vendors incorporating the specifications into their product. In the interim, we continue to encourage clinicians to leverage the service available through the OTNhub.

What is the Ontario eConsult Program?

The Ontario eConsult Program has been created to enable timely and equitable access to specialist advice for all patients in Ontario. The program integrates two successful initiatives: the BASE™ Managed Specialty model and the Ontario Telemedicine Network's (OTN) Direct to Specialist model. The program includes four services: Champlain BASE™ regional service, Ontario eConsult service, Teledermatology and Teleophthalmology.

What is the BASE™ Managed Specialty model?

This option enables the requesting provider to submit cases to a regional or provincial managed service, which is a group of specialists responding to eConsult cases for a given specialty or sub-specialty (e.g. cardiology). The case is then assigned based on specialist availability.

What is the OTN Direct to Specialist model?

This option enables the requesting provider to submit cases directly to individual specialists.

How do healthcare providers sign up?

To sign up for eConsult or for more information about the service, please contact the Ontario eConsult Centre of Excellence at eConsultCOE@toh.ca or go to www.eConsultOntario.ca.