



eCONSULT DEPLOYMENT AND EMR INTEGRATION

EMR Integration Pilot Evaluation Report Highlights

eConsult provides physicians and nurse practitioners with timely access to specialist advice and often eliminates the need to send patients for an in-person specialist visit. Through a private and secure web portal, requesting providers can send a specialist a clinical question about their patient and receive advice quickly and securely, generally within two business days.

While access via a web portal is important and useful, the 17,000+ Ontario clinicians who use electronic medical records (EMRs) prefer to access digital health tools through their EMRs to fit their workflows and integrate eConsults directly into their patients' electronic records. OntarioMD is working with clinicians and EMR vendors to make eConsult available through certified EMRs.

Since its launch, eConsult has grown in popularity and use among clinicians across Ontario. The EMR-integrated eConsult complements the service on OTNhub by offering an additional, convenient access point for clinicians. Access through EMRs makes it easier for primary care clinicians to quickly connect to specialists to seek specialty advice for patient care compared to web-based access.

OntarioMD evaluated the clinical impact and value of eConsult in support of clinicians' needs and provincial health priorities by testing the viability and benefits of eConsult integrated with clinician EMRs. More than 200 clinicians across Ontario are now using eConsult through QHR Technologies' Accuro® EMR, OSCAR EMR and KAI Innovations' OSCAR.

In addition to our work on EMR integration, OntarioMD also on-boarded many of the 17,000+ clinicians to the service in support of the Ontario eConsult Program, and trained them to use it effectively, to significantly reduce the time their patients waited for specialist advice.

Benefits Identified

Key findings from the Outcome Evaluation for eConsult EMR Integration conducted by OntarioMD:



Time Saved: Respondents reported saving an average of nearly **five minutes per consult** when launching eConsult through their EMR compared to via the web hub.



Improved Workflow: 90% of participants agreed that accessing eConsult through their EMR improves their practice workflow. A workflow simulation conducted in an EMR lab showed a reduction of up to 65% in the number of steps used to launch eConsult via EMR compared to other methods.



Increased Use: 90% of participants agreed that using eConsult through their EMR motivates them to use it more often.



Ease of Use: 80% agreed EMR-integrated eConsult was easy to use.

Methodology: The Outcome Evaluation was conducted to better understand clinician perspectives on EMR-integrated eConsult. It focused on key elements such as the time required for eConsult completion, frequency of use, efficiency of use through EMRs, and clinician satisfaction with EMR-integrated eConsult.

OntarioMD leveraged a variety of evaluation methods including a survey to 145 clinicians (33% response rate), workflow mapping based on test environment simulations, and a review of usage logs.

Useful Features

Survey respondents identified the features of EMR-integrated eConsult they liked best:



Auto-population of patient demographics



Ability to load attachments directly into the EMR



**Automatic documentation within the EMR
(patient chart)**

"I have found the eConsult EMR integration a very useful tool for providing patient care in Ontario."

Dr. Eric Hirshberg,
Staff Urologist, Guelph General
Hospital

Recommendations for Improved Clinician Experience

The evaluation survey provided participants with the opportunity to provide detailed comments about their experience with EMR-integrated eConsult. Their feedback offered valuable insight on how the EMR-integrated version can be further refined to ensure a better user experience:

- **Standardize the user experience for EMR-integrated eConsult across EMRs:** Users noted issues specific to their EMR, including login, file attachment, user interface, and how the EMR indicated a case completion.
- **Improve the ability to search by specialty:** Users noted challenges with finding specialists in their area and suggested incorporating an address book listing names of specialists located near them.
- **Support clinicians using eConsult through their EMR effectively:** Users noted the importance of training and support, and OntarioMD staff and EMR vendors will work together to ensure needs are addressed.

About the Ontario eConsult Program

The Ontario eConsult Program is led by the Ontario eConsult Centre of Excellence (eConsult COE), housed at The Ottawa Hospital in partnership with the Bruyère Research Institute. Partners include Champlain BASE™, the OTN, OntarioMD, eHealth Ontario, and various regional partners. The program is supported by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Contact

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