

AHA ACCESS TO SPECIALTY CARE TASK FORCE - PARTICIPANT EXERCISE MARCH 2017

During the Task Force meeting on March 2, 2017, the participants generated a list of ways e-consults can improve access to specialty care services. We defined e-consults as planned, primary care provider-to-specialty care provider communications. We agreed that e-consults alone, certainly cannot solve the problem, for example, if a patient needs hand surgery, an e-consult will not repair his hand. However we agreed that, done well, e-consults CAN make a big difference for both patients and providers, and improve our healthcare delivery system. In this exercise, we realized each benefit identified had the potential to make a positive impact in multiple categories.

	Benefits Provided Through E-Consults For -			
		Primary Care	Specialty Care	Healthcare
	Patient	Provider/Practice	Provider/Practice	Delivery System
Offers an "easier" way for a specialist to respond to a community need			✓	✓
Continuity of care from PCP to specialist and vice versa. i.e. pre-surgery lab work or post-surgery discharge instructions	✓			✓
More utilization of health IT		✓	✓	✓
Provides a second opinion	✓	✓		
Enhance care plans in primary care		✓		✓
Minimizes the struggle of medical providers to consult about minimal procedures; those that don't require hands-on care		✓	✓	
Research opportunities		✓	✓	
Reduces no-shows for consults			✓	✓
Increased patient engagement	✓	✓	✓	
Reach rural areas/populations that don't have specialty access	✓	✓	✓	✓
Asynchronous consults often more convenient for both PCP and specialist		✓	✓	
Improved patient outcome	✓			✓
More care coordination	✓			✓
Enable access to specialty care within a few hours	✓		✓	
Stronger safety net	✓			✓
Quicker resolution of some specialty care needs	✓		✓	
Ability to tackle low-hanging fruit – cases needing only minimal specialty care support			✓	✓

	Benefits Provided Through E-Consults For -			
		Primary Care	Specialy Care	Healthcare
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Shorter wait times for patient	✓			✓
Saves time for providers		✓	✓	
Avoiding unnecessary labs and tests	✓			✓
Easier on the specialty care providers than unexpected phone calls because have time to process info			✓	✓
E-consult planed appointments for both providers so adequate time provided for interchange of ideas and information		✓	✓	✓
Increased health literacy	✓			✓
Increased value-based care	✓			✓
Provide resources for next steps – based on decision tree algorithm		✓		✓
Provide decisions tree for common diagnoses		✓	✓	
Consulting clinicians has full information ahead of time to study and form opinion/diagnosis/recommdation		✓	✓	
Opens door to better PCP-Specialist relationship (and hopefully more charitable attitude from specialists)		✓	✓	✓
Allows/facilitates providers to develop relationships		✓		
By e-consult, may be possible to network with specialists to find other resources to help patient with specific issues –		✓		✓
Educational for providers if seeing multiple of the same condition/symptoms		✓	✓	
Physican access to academic medicine		✓		✓
The learning that happens between physicians as a result – for future cases		✓		✓
Increased patient satisfaction	✓			✓
Medication management/recommendations from psychiatrist to PCP	✓	✓		
Increased knowledge of resoruces in community for behavioral health		✓		✓
When lack of transportation is a barrier, mitigates the transportation issue	✓	✓	✓	✓

	Benefits Provided Through E-Consults For -			
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Better patient experience avoiding long wait times; unnecessary transportation costs	✓			✓
Potentially immediate prescriptions given for behavioral health conditions	✓	✓		
Prevent hospitalizations	✓			✓
If language a barrier, then e-consult reduces need for specialty care translator			✓	
Decrease patient anxiety about their condition	✓			
For specialty care providers, allows them to make difference, even when they don't want to accept Medicaid or Medicare patients directly				
Reduce expense of office visit	✓			✓
Avoids the dreaded (and sad) "waiting room effect" for those practices that want to avoid having "those" patients in their offices			✓	
Alternative treatment options or brainstorming labs and imaging that can be done prior to official referral to specialty		✓	✓	✓
Increased provider communication		✓	✓	✓
Often PCP clinic staff more able to identify and address issues related to social determinants of health	✓			✓
Uninsured patient can access some level of specialty care info through PCP	✓			
Provides mechanism for specialists to provide expertise/help those in need, without committing as much time to the endeavor.			✓	
Reduce backlog of appointments for providers		✓	✓	
Primary care practices usually more likely to be able to serve patients with multiple, complex issues (social determinants of health).	✓	✓		
Triage patients who may not really need specialty appt; avoid unnecessary referrals	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prevents patients walking out the door with nothing (no hope)	✓			
Enables PCPs to practice at the top of their license with continuous learning	✓	✓		✓

	Benefits Provided Through E-Consults For -			
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Improved referrals by helping PCPs to more complete workups and choose best specialty	✓	✓	✓	✓