

## CCIP eConsults Process and Guidelines

### **Program Description and Objective:**

Description: eConsults is a telehealth system in which Primary Care Providers (PCPs) consult with a specialist reviewer electronically via “eConsults” prior to referring a patient to a specialist for non-urgent care. This service can be made available to all patients within the practice and for all specialty referrals, but may be more appropriate for certain types of referrals such as cardiology and dermatology.

Objective: Improve timely access to specialists, improve PCP and specialist communication, and reduce downstream costs through avoiding unnecessary in person specialist consultations.

### **High-Level Program Design:**

1. Identify patients eligible for eConsult
2. Primary care provider places eConsult to specialist provider
3. Specialist determines if full consult is needed or if more information is needed prior to referral
4. Specialist communicates outcome back to primary care provider

### **Detailed Program Design:**

#### Guidelines

1. Identify patients eligible for eConsult
  - Practice defines for which specialty they will do eConsults<sup>1</sup>
  - The use of an eConsult will be discussed with the patient and with the patient’s assent an eConsult will be sent
    - eConsults will be sent for all patients who assent to the eConsult with the exception of urgent consults and for patients who have a pre-existing relationship with a specialty provider for which the eConsult would be sent
2. Primary care provider places eConsult to specialist provider
  - Primary care practice designates with which specialty practice or specialty providers they will coordinate eConsults
    - The designated specialty practice or specialty providers who do eConsults will be distinct from the specialists who do the face to face consultation if ultimately a face to face consultation is needed<sup>2</sup>.
  - In partnership with the specialty practice and/or providers, a standardized referral is created

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<sup>1</sup> Policy reports done in Connecticut by UCONN and Medicaid explored the use of eConsults for Cardiology, Dermatology, Gastroenterology, Neurology, Orthopedics and Urology ([http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/assets/econsults\\_ii\\_specialties.pdf](http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/assets/econsults_ii_specialties.pdf); [http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/assets/econsults\\_cardiology.pdf](http://www.publichealth.uconn.edu/assets/econsults_cardiology.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> This will promote neutral decision making on the part of the specialist by eliminating the financial incentive to suggest a face to face visit.

- eConsult referrals commonly have standard form text options and free text to ensure important details are shared as well as any additional detail the primary care provider feels is important (Kim-Hwang JE, 2010)
- The primary care practice and specialty practice will develop a technology solution to push eConsults to the specialty practice and/or providers designated to do eConsults
  - Solutions will vary based on available technology to both primary care providers and specialists. Range of solutions include: faxing, secure messaging, direct messaging, EMR based solution
- The primary care practice will develop a process and protocol to send eConsult to designated specialty practice and/or providers
  - Identify individual in the primary care practice to be responsible for sending the eConsult to the specialty practice and/or providers
  - Set timeframe within which the eConsult should be sent post-primary care visit
- The specialty practice and/or provider will develop a process and protocol to receive and review the eConsult
  - There will be a coordinator whose responsibility it is to receive and prepare the consult for review
  - Set timeframe within which the eConsult has to be reviewed once received by specialty practice
- 3. Specialist determines if full consult is needed or if more information is needed prior to referral
  - Upon review the specialist will make one of three determinations:
    - The patient does not need a referral
    - The patient may need a referral but additional information is needed from the primary care provider (i.e.; additional history, additional tests run, etc.)
    - The patient needs an in-person visit
- 4. Specialist communicates outcome back to primary care provider
  - The primary care practice and specialty practice should have processes and protocols in place for primary care and patient notification of eConsult outcomes. Processes and protocols will include detail on:
    - The timeframe of primary care notification: Regardless of the outcome, notification to the primary care practice about the eConsult outcome should occur within a set timeframe
    - If a patient does not need a referral or additional information is needed before a referral decision should be made, it is the responsibility of the primary care provider to notify the patient and arrange for additional testing if necessary
      1. The primary care provider should notify the patient of the outcome within a specified timeframe
    - If a patient needs an in-person visit, it is the responsibility of the primary care practice to connect the patient to referral coordination services in the primary care practice to schedule the visit, to confirm that a visit was scheduled and to ensure the necessary information from the specialist is shared with the primary care provider from the in-person consultation

## References

Kim-Hwang JE, C. A. (2010). Evaluating Electronic Referrals for Specialty Care at a Public Hospital. *Journal of General Internal Medicine* , 1123-118.

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