

## CMPA Assessment of eConsult

### What is an eConsult?

An eConsult occurs when a primary care provider (PCP) electronically sends a question to a specialist. This can be a simple question (e.g., about a drug dosage) or a more complex question following an initial assessment by the PCP (e.g., sending a question with images of the patient for a virtual dermatology assessment). eConsults may avoid the need to refer a patient to a specialist for diagnosis and treatment.



### How is an eConsult different from an informal consultation?

In many organized care settings, when a PCP has a question about a patient, they are able to approach a colleague and ask for advice. These “hallway consultations” happen frequently and though the PCP often gets the advice needed, there is no formal documentation of the consultation. There is also no way for the specialist to get paid.

### What is the CMPA’s position on PCPs and specialists using eConsult to provide patient care?

The CMPA has assessed the eConsult flow of care and determined that it provides an opportunity to improve efficiency, enhance patient care, expand access to specialists and provides a clear audit trail of the specialist’s advice given to the PCP for the suggested care of the patient.

### Do you need to obtain your 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 your patient of your use of this tool is good practice.

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

When using the eConsult service, the PCP remains the MRP for the patient, 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.

### What are the liability considerations for the PCP?

The PCP holds the duty of care to proceed with the eConsult and move the closed eConsult interaction into the patient record.

### What are the liability considerations for the specialist?

A physician may create a duty of care by providing advice on a patient. This can be done via a face-to-face visit with the patient, or a communication (call, email, eConsult) with another physician. In the case of an eConsult, a specialist providing information is expected to gather the appropriate information (if available), and use it to provide sound medical advice. A specialist providing advice through an eConsult retains the same responsibilities around appropriate and complete clinical guidance as with a traditional consultation, even though s/he may not know the name of the patient or have met him/her face-to-face.

The CMPA supports eConsult as a means for specialists to formally document their advice, and as such the CMPA will provide assistance to any physician who requires it as a result of using this service.

### Contact

If you have additional questions,  
please email: [eConsult@ontariomd.com](mailto:eConsult@ontariomd.com)

#### OntarioMD Inc.

150 Bloor St. West, Suite 900, Toronto, Ontario M5S 3C1  
Phone: **416.623.1248** | Toll-free: **1.866.339.1233**  
Fax: **416.623.1249** | Email: [info@ontariomd.com](mailto:info@ontariomd.com)  
Web: [www.ontariomd.ca](http://www.ontariomd.ca) | Twitter: [@OntarioEMRs](https://twitter.com/OntarioEMRs)  
LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/ontariomd](http://www.linkedin.com/company/ontariomd)