Background
The Champlain BASE™ (Building Access to Specialists through eConsultation) eConsult service began as a conversation between a family physician (Dr. Liddy) and endocrinologist (Dr. Keely), who felt something could be done to address the excessive wait times many patients endured in accessing specialist care. Delays in receiving specialist care cause patient anxiety, result in duplication of testing and provider frustration, and can lead to poorer patient outcomes.

In 2009, a small proof-of-concept project was launched. Starting with five specialists and 15 primary care physicians, in partnership with the Champlain LHIN and Winchester District Hospital, a secure online electronic communication tool that allows primary care providers’ quick access to specialty care for their patients was developed. Through the Champlain BASE™ service a primary care provider can submit a non-urgent, patient-specific question to a participating specialty. The request is processed and assigned to an appropriate specialist, who is asked to respond within seven days and a) provide guidance on how the PCP can treat the patient, b) recommend a face-to-face referral, or c) request more information.

The service’s growth has been consistently guided by evidence and our evaluation framework encompasses several dimensions (patient perspective, costs, utilization, provider experience, educational aspects). We use system-level utilization data augmented by additional studies incorporating a number of methods, including a randomized controlled trial, surveys, and interviews.

Funding and National Collaborations
Dr.’s Liddy and Keely have been successful in obtaining almost $2 million dollars in funding for operational support and research for the Champlain BASE™ eConsult service. Funding has been received from CIHR, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, MOHLTC, Bruyere Research Institute, University of Ottawa Department of Medicine, and CHAMO (CHEO AFP Innovation fund).

Through this funding, they have established a national collaborative which includes Canada Health Infoway, Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, Canadian Medical Protective Association, Canadian Patient Safety Institute, Government of the Northwest Territories, Manitoba Health Research Council, and national partnerships. Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, The College of Family Physicians of Canada, University of Alberta, and Memorial University.
eConsult by the Numbers*

The Champlain BASE™ service has been hugely successful. A total of 41,728 cases have been completed by 1,417 registered PCPs (1,202 family physicians and 215 nurse practitioners) from 520 clinics in 118 towns/cities, who can access 114 specialty services. It has provided thousands of patients with quick access to specialist advice. Below, we present some key numbers that indicate eConsult’s impact on specialist access, based on the Quadruple Aim framework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population health</th>
<th>28,792</th>
<th>The number of eConsults (69% of cases) completed without the patient requiring a face-to-face specialist visit.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16,893</td>
<td>The number of eConsults (40% of cases) where a referral was originally contemplated but avoided based on the specialist’s advice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The average response time, in days, from the moment the eConsult is sent to the time the first specialist response is given. The fastest response time was 2 minutes!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient experience</th>
<th>87%</th>
<th>Percentage of patients who considered eConsult useful in their case.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97%</td>
<td>Percentage of patients who considered eConsult an acceptable alternative to traditional face-to-face referrals.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Provider experience</th>
<th>92%</th>
<th>Percentage of cases that primary care providers rated as high/very high value. Common benefits cited include prompt replies, quality of advice, and educational benefits.</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94%</td>
<td>Percentage of specialists who stated eConsult improves inter-provider communication.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost savings</th>
<th>$47.35</th>
<th>Weighted average cost of an eConsult case across specialty groups (compared to $133.60/case for traditional referrals).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$11.00</td>
<td>Additional savings per case when accounting for the potential cost of avoided referrals and out-of-pocket expenses for patients (e.g. transportation costs, lost wages).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*as of 31 Jul 18

Research Program

Our program of research is grounded in The Quadruple Aim framework. We have successfully published in all quadrants demonstrating high impact of this innovative service.

Improving the Health of Populations
- eConsult cuts response times from months to two days
- Two-thirds of cases did not require a face-to-face specialist referral
- Exploration of specific populations (e.g. chronic pain patients, pharmacists) reveals high value of the service

Enhancing the Patient Experience of Care
- eConsult responds to patients’ previously articulated dissatisfaction with wait times
- Interviews with patients reveal high satisfaction with eConsult’s impact on access, care quality, and continuity of care†

Reducing the Per Capita Cost of Health Care
- We demonstrate a cost effective payment model for specialists
- Across specialty groups, the service costs a weighted average of $47.35/case versus $133.60/case for traditional referrals
- Costs drop dramatically after the start-up period, reaching ~$6.45/case by year 3
- Further savings that account for societal costs are being explored
Improving the Work Life of Health Care Providers and Staff
- PCPs rank eConsult as high/very high value in over 90% of cases
- 94% of specialists report that eConsult improves communication with PCPs
- eConsult provides a powerful teaching tool for PCPs

Publications
The Quadruple Aim framework provides a useful lens through which to view the scope of our research:

Improving the Health of Populations
1) Building Access to Specialist Care through E-Consultation. *Open Med* 2013
3) Improving access to chronic pain services through eConsultation: A cross-sectional study of the Champlain BASE eConsult service. *Pain Medicine* 2016 [http://painmedicine.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/04/02/pm.pnw038](http://painmedicine.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/04/02/pm.pnw038)
4) Rationale and model for integrating the pharmacist into the outpatient referral-consultation process. *Can Fam Physician* 2016 [http://www.cfp.ca/content/62/2/111?etoc](http://www.cfp.ca/content/62/2/111?etoc)
8) Improving Access to Specialist Care for an Aging Population. *Gerontol Geriatr Med* 2016 [http://jgm.sagepub.com/content/2/233721416677195](http://jgm.sagepub.com/content/2/233721416677195)
13) Prevention of delayed referrals through the Champlain BASE eConsult Service. *Can Fam Physician* 2017 [http://www.cfp.ca/content/63/8/e381](http://www.cfp.ca/content/63/8/e381)
16) Improving access to allied health professionals through the Champlain BASE eConsult Service: a cross-sectional study in Canada. *Br J Gen Pract* 2017 [https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp17X693125](https://doi.org/10.3399/bjgp17X693125)
23) The doctor is (virtually) in: Using electronic consultation to provide access to prompt psychiatric services. *Psychiatric Services* 2018 https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.69302
29) Improving access to Gastroenterologist using eConsultation: A way to potentially shorten wait times. *J Can Assoc Gastroenterol* 2018 https://doi.org/10.1093/jcag/gwy017

**Enhancing the Patient Experience of Care**

4) Just a click away: exploring patients’ perspectives on receiving care through the Champlain BASE™ eConsult service. *Fam Pract* 2018 https://doi.org/10.1093/fampra/cmx073

**Reducing the Per Capita Cost of Health Care**

2) What are the costs of improving access to specialists through eConsultation? The Champlain BASE experience. *Stud Health Technol Inform* 2015 http://ebooks.iospress.nl/volumearticle/39213
4) What are the cost savings associated with providing access to care through the Champlain BASE eConsult service? *BMJ Open* 2016 http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/6/6/e010920.abstract
Improving the Work Life of Health Care Physicians and Staff


8) Specialist perspectives on Ontario eConsult services. *Telemed J E Health* 2018 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1089/tmj.2018.0012](http://dx.doi.org/10.1089/tmj.2018.0012)

Exploring Policy and Implementation Issues Pertaining to eConsult


6) Social franchising: Scale and spread of innovation in Canada. *Health Pol Technol* 2018 [https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hlpt.2018.03.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hlpt.2018.03.005)


We are actively disseminating our work through social media and electronic resources

Website: www.champlainBASEeConsult.ca; Twitter: @BASE_eConsult; eBook: http://itunes.apple.com/us/book/id1108131512

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