

eConsult in pediatrics improves access and defers face-to-face visits to specialists

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- **<5% accessed healthcare for the same reason**
- **eConsult visit is cheaper than FTF visit**

Introduction:

- eConsult is a web-based security protected service where a primary care practitioner (PCP) can ask a non-urgent type of question to a pediatric specialist
- Median response time 0.9 days for eConsult vs. 67 days for face-to-face consult (FTF) (IQR 45-86 days)
- Indirect cost savings per family \$135.16/visit
- 94% of PCPs rated eConsult as high/very high value for patients
- PCPs reported that, in 37% of cases, they would have sent the patient in for a FTF were it not for eConsult
- This has been reported consistently but this is based on subjective reporting
- We performed the following study to determine whether study participants further accessed health care resources for the same reason after use of eConsult. We also compared a group of patients seen FTF vs. being seen by eConsult for the same reason.

Results:

- **<5% accessed the health care system for the identical diagnosis and specialty group**
- FTF visits generated 12.61 time more outpatient visits (CI 2.28-69.66, p=.002)
- FTF visits cost more: median \$541/FTF[Q1-Q3; \$204-\$1594] vs. \$60/eConsult [\$52-\$72];p<.0001)
- There were no deaths

Methods:

- June 2014-Dec 2017
- Retrospective study on patients (<18yo) defined in whom their PCP reported a FTF referral was averted by completing an eConsult visit N=391
- In Canada, Healthcare is deemed a right of every citizen and all costs are paid by the government; each Canadian is given a health care number which is charged every time they access any type of health care
- Using the Canadian universal health care number, we tracked health care access through provincial administrative databases and hospital electronic medical records documenting healthcare use for identical diagnosis and specialty seen within 18 months of initial eConsult
- Also, a retrospective case-control study compared utilization and costs between an eConsult versus FTF visit for the same reasons

Conclusion:

eConsult is an efficient and cost-effective system that can safely increase capacity in a pediatric setting to minimize FTF specialist visits in elective cases.

NEJM
Catalyst

ICHOM 2024

21-22 October | Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam

