



October 19, 2018

Statement of Support for eConsult as Standard of Practice

On behalf of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, I would like to express support for electronic consultation or eConsult as a standard of practice in Canada.

The secure eConsult online service allows primary care providers to contact consulting specialists with relevant clinical questions. Responses are provided in a timely manner with advice on how to treat the patient, a recommendation for a referral or a request for more information. As such, eConsult has become an important part of the referral-consultation process and offers a promising solution to long wait times and disparities in access to specialist care in Canada.

Drs. Clare Liddy, FCFP, and Erin Keely, FRCPC, co-founders of the Champlain BASE™ eConsult service based in Ottawa, have published over 50 peer-reviewed articles demonstrating eConsult's ability to reduce wait times, enhance primary care delivery, increase access to specialist care and patient satisfaction, and reduce costs. Of nearly 40,000 cases to date through the BASE™ eConsult services, the average response time is only two days and two-thirds of eConsults were completed without the patient needing a face-to-face specialist visit.

The Royal College is pleased to be a partner in the Connected Medicine Collaborative. Led by the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement, this initiative is scaling up and adapting two well-established services aimed at improving access to specialist advice- BASE™ an eConsult service founded in Ontario and RACE™ a telephone rapid access service founded in British Columbia.

With 11 teams across the country, the Collaborative supports healthcare delivery organizations as they develop and implement remote services to improve primary care access to specialty care. At present, the Connected Medicine initiative is supporting initiatives in Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Through our participation in the Connected Medicine Collaborative, we've heard from specialists who see eConsult services as a tremendous opportunity to benefit patients, reduce wait times and improve the health care system by reducing fragmentation and cost. With an emphasis on collaborative care and shared learning, eConsult services also strengthen professional networks and relationships between primary care providers and specialists.

The Royal College is committed to working with partners to ensure that patients in all communities have the greatest possible access to specialized care, including through eConsult services. To this end, we encourage health system change that allows specialist physicians to share their expertise through eConsult services and to develop the competencies needed to provide technology-enabled care.

We look forward to our ongoing collaboration with the eConsult team in this important work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "APadmos", with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

Andrew Padmos, BA, MD, FRCPC, FACP
Chief Executive Officer