



Patient Experience & Engagement with eConsults: the What, the Why & the How

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Questions to Consider

- How are you capturing (or planning to capture) the experience of patients in your eConsult system? What is it that you want to know? It is engagement, experience, both?
- How you able to hear from diverse patient groups? On what basis will you stratify them?
- What kinds of concerns or ideas are your patients raising already? What education is needed in advance of assessment?
- Describe the quality of communication between patients, PCPs and specialists on eConsults in your setting. Who is communicating about the process and how? Is this documented?
- How can you further improve patient engagement or experience?

eConsults & the Quadruple Aim Promise

69% of specialty referrals resolved w/o face to face; lower ED utilization

(Olayiwola, Anderson, *Ann Fam Med*, 2016)

Average wait times dropped from 112 days to 49 days after 9-months post-implementation

(Chen, *NEJM* 2013)

eConsults for Cardiology demonstrate significant total cost savings

(Anderson, Olayiwola et al, In press)

6 days for eConsult vs. 24 days for visit

(Olayiwola, Anderson, *Ann Fam Med*, 2016)



Significant system efficiencies gained for clinics and patients

(Chen et al *Health Affairs* 2010)

Better specialist understanding of clinical questions

(Kim-Huang *JGIM* 2010)

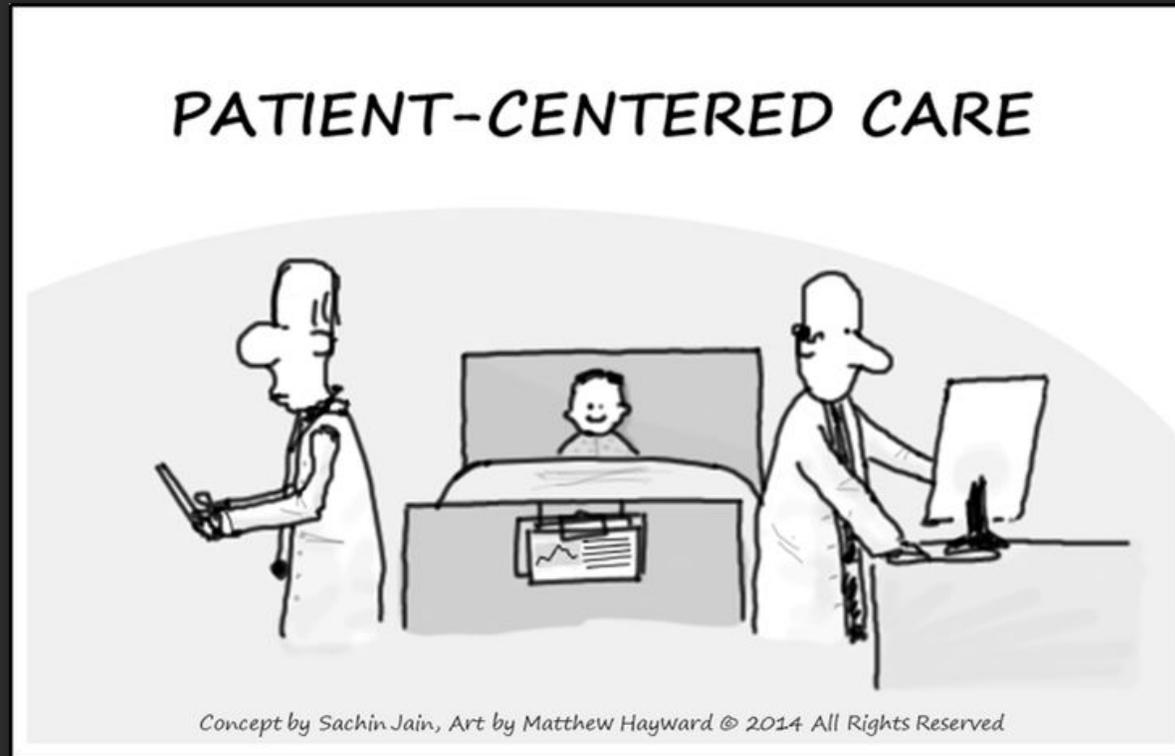
WHAT ELSE??

71% of primary care providers report high quality specialist communication

(Tuot, *Healthcare*, 2015)



What is Patient Centered Care in eConsults?



What are we really trying to understand?

	Patient Engagement	Patient Experience
Goals	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drive better health and outcomes 2. Empower patients and loved ones to be active in their own care 3. Reduce costs 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Drive better health and outcomes 2. Exceed expectations 3. Reduce suffering 4. Brand differentiation
Stakeholders	Patient, likely others	Patient, likely others
Context	Patient's own health	All-encompassing (access, communication, food, etc.)
Patient involvement (behaviors and ownership)	Required	Not required (though in an ideal experience, patients are partners and co-designers)
Time	Transactional or longitudinal	Transactional or longitudinal
Use of health self-management tools/services	Yes	No
Validated measurement	Patient Activation Measure (PAM), PROMIS, Patient Health Engagement (PHE) Scale	HCAHPS, CGCAHPS, etc.

“The goals of **Patient Experience** are to increase patient loyalty, increase market share and exceed the Patient’s expectations. The goals of **Patient Engagement** are to get folks invested in their own care by providing opportunities and structures for patients and their families to become active participants in healthcare.”

- *Patient & Family Centered Care Partners*

What does the literature say about patients and eConsult systems?

No clear preferences for electronic vs. in-person communication ([Palen, 2012](#))

Generally accepted as a way of reducing wait times ([Liddy, 2015](#))

Patients assume e-communication already occurs and engagement should be on a continuum ([Olayiwola, Tuot et al -2017 in press](#))

Consider strategies to engage patients of different backgrounds & languages ([Olayiwola, Tuot et al -2017 in press](#))

Strategies for Assessing Experience and Engagement of Patients

Clinician Assessments



(April 2015)

Patient Focus Groups



Patient Surveys



(Oct 2015)

Strategies for Assessing Experience and Engagement of Patients

Clinician Assessments



- Liddy et al (2015)
- Mixed methods study
- Focus on patient experience

Engagement or Experience?

Strategies for Assessing Experience and Engagement of Patients

- Palen et al (2012)
- Observational case-control study (Virtual Consults – VC vs Traditional Consults- TC)
- Sample of patients who had VCs requested by physicians (N = 270) were matched with patients who had TCs requested by physicians (N = 270), by patient age, gender, reason for the consult, and specialty department.
- Patients invited to complete satisfaction survey
- Patients who completed a satisfaction survey indicated they were satisfied with their care, regardless of the kind of consult

Patient Surveys



Source: Palen, T. E., Price, D., Shetterly, S., & Wallace, K. B. (2012). Comparing virtual consults to traditional consults using an electronic health record: an observational case-control study. *BMC medical informatics and decision making*, 12(1), 65.

Patient Survey: Ratings 1-10 on a Likert Scale

	N				p value*
Rating of Primary Care					
Virtual consult (VC)					0.99
Traditional consult (TC)					
Rating of Specialty					
Virtual consult (VC)					0.51
Traditional consult (TC)					
Rating of Satisfaction					
Virtual consult (VC)				10	0.63
Traditional consult (TC)	65	8.51	1	10	

Engagement or Experience?

Patient Survey Excerpt

Adapted the survey from the modified Adult Ambulatory Care Consumer Assessment of Health Plans Survey (A-CAHPS)

- Please choose from the following statements that best reflect this visit:
 - I was given a referral for a visit to see a specialist
 - This doctor discussed getting information from a specialist with me and later contacted me to share the specialists' recommendations
 - This doctor discussed getting information from a specialist with me but was only going to contact me if changes to my care was needed
 - This doctor discussed getting information from a specialist with me but I haven't heard about recommendations at this time
 - This doctor and I did not discuss getting additional specialist information at this visit

- Have you see seen the specialist yet? Y N If no, skip to question 16.
- Using any number from 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with the recommendations made by the specialist for this problem? _____
- Did you have any questions about the recommendations made by the specialist for this problem? Y N
 - If YES, using any number from 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with your ability to ask questions about the specialist recommendations for this problem? _____
- Skip to question 16.
- At this visit, the doctor you saw asked for input from a specialist to help take care of your concern at that visit. Please tell us:
- Using any number from 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with the time it took you to hear about additional recommendations for care of this problem? _____
- (A-CAHPS question #PK2) Did this doctor who asked the specialist for input seem informed and up-to-date about the care recommended by specialists for your problem? Y N
- If this doctor is not your personal care physician, does your personal care physician seem informed and up-to-date about the care recommended by specialists for your problem? Y N N/A (this doctor is my personal care physician) Don't know

Strategies for Assessing Experience and Engagement of Patients

- Olayiwola, Tuot et al (in press)
- Mixed methods study of patient experience (English, Spanish, Cantonese speaking groups), PCCs and eCR specialists (in press)
- Focus groups conducted in English, Spanish and Cantonese speaking groups
- Open-ended focus groups

Engagement or Experience?

Patient questions centered around overall experience with subspecialist consultations, satisfaction with specialty visits, perceived coordination of PCC and subspecialty care, communication with and between PCCs and specialists about electronic consultation process, **potential patient or family/caregiver role in the consultation process, and availability of such potential roles**

Specialist open-ended focus group questions explored **potential for patient or family/caregiver role in the consultative process**

- PCC survey examined perceptions of the **potential for patient or family/caregiver roles in the electronic consultation process**

Proposed Continuum of Patient Engagement in eCR

Communication and setting expectations

Obtaining and understanding information about the process, timing and goals of the eCR

Minimal engagement

Viewing components of the eCR system and clarifying as needed; scheduling appointments if requested

Maximum engagement

Viewing the eCR dialogue; adding information to the exchange/treatment plan or providing health status information; decision-making around further care

Proposed Continuum of Patient Engagement in eCR

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One Additional Strategy for Assessing Experience and Engagement of Patients

Clinician Assessments



(April 2015)

Patient Focus Groups



Patient Advisory Councils



(Oct 2015)

Patient Surveys



Improving Communication

Patient education materials for point of care

- What is an eConsult?
- What are the next steps?

San Francisco Health Network eConsults

What is an eConsult?
Today, your doctor/provider sent an electronic message (eConsult) to a specialist asking for advice about your health concerns.

What happens during an eConsult?

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graph LR; S1[STEP 1. Today  
You and your doctor/provider discussed your health concern.] --> S2[STEP 2. Today  
Your doctor/provider sent a message (eConsult) to a specialist.  
Specialty name: _____]; S2 --> S3[STEP 3. Within 1 week  
The specialist reviews the eConsult and responds to your doctor/provider.]; S3 --> S4[STEP 4. Within 2 weeks  
A member of your care team contacts you about next steps, if needed.];
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What are possible next steps after your eConsult?

1. Specialist gives advice to your doctor/provider about **more tests**, **confirms the current treatment plan** or **recommends a new treatment plan**.

OR

2. An **appointment with the specialist** to further discuss your health concerns. The specialist's office will call or send a letter with appointment details. In most cases, this appointment will be within 3 weeks of the recommendation for you to be seen. Please make sure that your phone number and address are up to date in our system so that the specialist's office can reach you.

If you don't hear anything about your eConsult within 3 weeks, call your clinic to find out!

An Evolving Approach

Iterative process with patient advisors and advocates

- Simpler language
- Less text
- Translations into Spanish and Cantonese
- Pilot with patients and PCPs and revise as needed

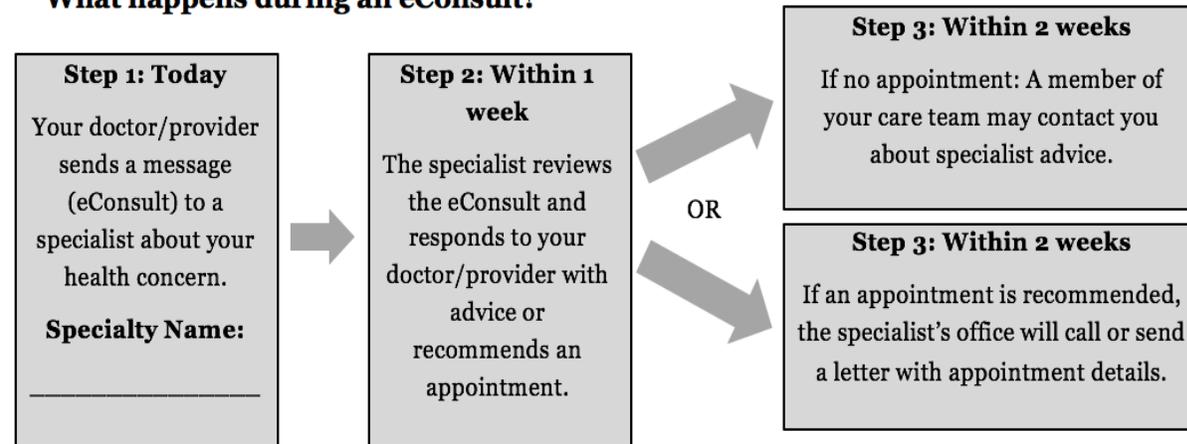


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Funded by the Blue Shield of California Foundation



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