

E-consultations can improve access to, timeliness of care

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(HealthDay)—Electronic consultation (e-consultation), an asynchronous,

non-face-to-face consultation between a primary care physician and a specialist, can improve access to care and reduce wait times, according to a study published in the March/April issue of the *Annals of Family Medicine*.

J. Nwando Olayiwola, M.D., M.P.H., from the Center for Excellence in Primary Care at San Francisco General Hospital, and colleagues conducted a [randomized trial](#) to examine the efficacy and effectiveness of e-consultations in reducing wait times. Primary care clinicians from 12 practice sites in a community health center were randomized to either a control (traditional referral; 19 clinicians) or intervention (e-consultation referral; 17 clinicians) arm for referral to cardiologists. The [clinicians](#) referred 590 patients during the study.

The researchers found that 69 percent of e-consultations were resolved without a cardiologist visit. The median days to a review for an e-consultation was five days, compared with 24 days for a visit for control patients, after adjustment for covariates. Fewer cardiac-related emergency department visits were observed for the intervention group in a review of six-month follow-up data.

"E-consultation referrals improved access to and timeliness of care for an underserved population, reduced overall specialty utilization, and streamlined specialty referrals without any increase in adverse cardiovascular outcomes," the authors write. "E-consultations are a potential solution for improving access to specialty care."

More information: [Full Text](#)

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