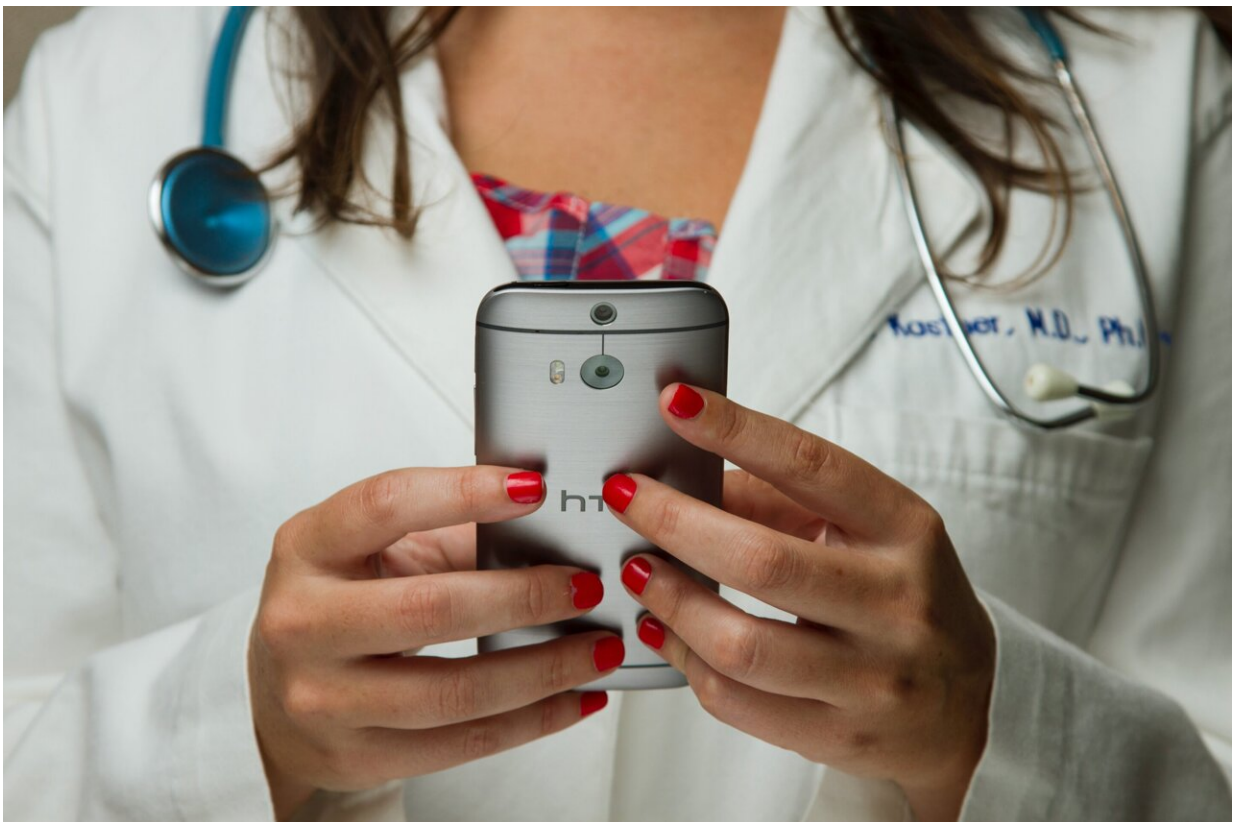


# Canadian eConsult services provided much-needed COVID-19 information, specialty consults for primary care doctors

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Researchers in Ontario, Canada, conducted a study to assess the impact of utilizing an electronic consultation (eConsult) service to provide

timely access to COVID-19 specialist advice for primary care practitioners. Published in *The Annals of Family Medicine*, the study examined eConsult cases submitted to a COVID-19 specialist group to assess usage patterns, impact on response times and referrals, and the content of clinical questions being asked. They analyzed 289 eConsults submitted to the Champlain BASE() and Ontario eConsult services between March and September 2020.

Fifty-one eConsult requests were submitted to the Champlain BASE() and 238 to the Ontario eConsult service. The median specialist response time was 0.6 days (range: three minutes to 15 days) and the average time spent by specialists per eConsult was 16 minutes (range: five to 59 minutes). In 24% of cases, eConsults resulted in an avoided face-to-face referral, saving patients and the health care system time and money.

Five major themes were identified relating to clinical questions: (1) precautions for high-risk populations; (2) guidance on [self-isolation](#) and return to work; (3) diagnostic clarification and/or need for COVID-19 testing; (4) guidance on [personal protective equipment](#); and (5) management of chronic symptoms. Researchers assert that their study demonstrates the significant potential of eConsults during a pandemic as the protocol was quickly implemented across Ontario and resulted in rapid and improved access to specialist care.

**More information:** Jatinderpreet Singh et al, Evaluation of an Electronic Consultation Service for COVID-19 Care, *The Annals of Family Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1370/afm.2807](https://doi.org/10.1370/afm.2807)

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