

Project Background

In 2021, with federal funding, MCD Global Health (MCD) completed a comprehensive needs assessment and strategic plan to launch a statewide eConsult network in Maine, working in collaboration with local health centers and critical access hospitals. In 2022, MCD was awarded funding from the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to establish a one-year pilot program. The Maine eConsult Network launched later that year, with eight primary care organizations enrolled.

What is an eConsult?

An Electronic Consultation, or eConsult, is a web-based tool that allows a primary care provider (PCP) and a specialist to securely share health information and electronically communicate about patient care. The provider-to-provider eConsult system reduces the need for unnecessary specialty referrals and physical trips for specialist visits, as patient care is provided by the PCP based on guidance from the specialist. The model is especially promising for increasing rural access to specialty care. For patients living in rural Maine for example, an eConsult can mean receiving specialist recommendations within a few days from their PCP, instead of waiting months (sometimes up to a year) for a specialty appointment that could take a full day of travel to attend.

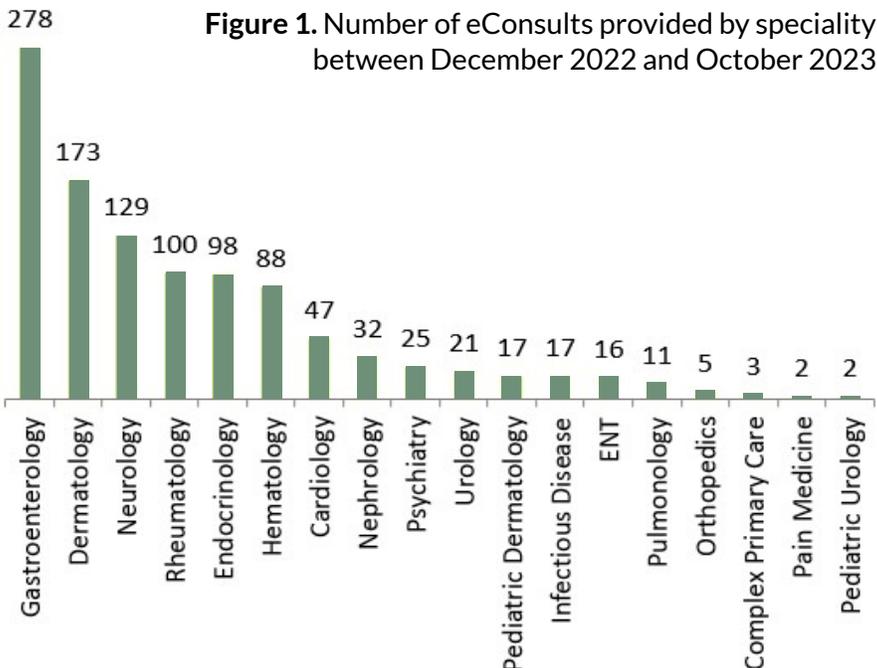


I work on an island, but sometimes, it feels like I'm an island and I don't have specialty resources. Knowing that I can place this consult and have this conversation with a specialist makes us less isolated and better equipped to serve patients, especially when they otherwise will wait months to learn more.

Natasha Neal, DO, MPH
Family Medicine Physician
Pilot participant,
Maine eConsult Network

Pilot Site Organizations

Bucksport Regional Health Center
Fish River Rural Health
Mount Desert Island Hospital
Nasson Health Care
Penobscot Community Health Care
Pines Health Services
Pinnacle Health and Rehab
St. Joseph Healthcare



MCD Global Health (MCD) is a public health nonprofit organization and member of the National Network of Public Health Institutes. We are recognized in the United States and internationally as a leader, innovator, and trusted partner in the design, implementation, and assessment of high-quality and enduring programs in public health.

Learn more about MCD at <https://mcd.org>.

1,064

eConsults completed between
December '22 and October '23

134

Primary Care Providers
served by the network

17.4

Average response time
for an eConsult

Independent organizations often face challenges with utilizing eConsults due to the lack of direct access to specialty care that may be available to larger, integrated health systems. The primary goal of the Maine eConsult Network has been to establish a comprehensive and timely specialty resource to support these organizations and their patients.

This pilot program has demonstrated significant benefits for critical access hospitals and federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) through integration into the eConsult network, including but not limited to: Fewer unnecessary specialty care referrals; Cost savings to patients due to less travel and time taken off of work or school; PCP education through enhanced specialty care guidance; Shorter wait times for patients to access specialty-level care.

Applicable CPT Codes and Definitions

CPT® 99451: Interprofessional telephone/internet/electronic health record assessment and management service provided by a consultative physician including a written report to the patient's treating/requesting physician or other qualified healthcare professional, 5 or more minutes of medical consultative time

CPT® 99452: Interprofessional telephone/internet/electronic health record referral service(s) provided by a treating/requesting physician or qualified healthcare professional, 30 minutes



It is often possible, via eConsults, to get guidance on what tests to order, help interpret results, and recommend medication. These three core functions reduce the amount of time it takes for care plans to be executed, which means more efficient, less expensive care for patients. The face-to-face visit with the specialist, if needed, can be more nuanced and higher value because the patient will be present with relevant testing.

Jennifer Monti, MD
Cardiology Specialist
Pilot participant,
Maine eConsult Network

Visit econsultmaine.org to learn more