

# CONNECTED MEDICINE:

## Spreading Asynchronous, Provider-to-Provider Remote Consult Solutions: The Experience of a Pan-Canadian Collaborative

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### BACKGROUND

Long wait times for specialist care is one of the most significant problems in Canadian healthcare. Remote consultation has emerged as an innovative approach to address this and facilitate communication between primary care and specialist providers. Two leading Canadian initiatives, the Champlain BASE™ eConsult service and the Rapid Access to Consultative Expertise (RACE™) telephone advice line, are at the vanguard of enhanced provider-to-provider communication, and are the focus of the Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement’s (CFHI) Connected Medicine Collaborative. CFHI launched this Collaborative in partnership with Canada Health Infoway, The College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada in June 2017 to support teams to adapt RACE™ and BASE™ to their local contexts across Canada. Both tools work to **reduce unnecessary referrals, improve provider-to-provider communication, and enhance patient experience.**

### COLLABORATIVE AIM

The Collaborative has three aims:

1. Support participating healthcare delivery organizations design, implement and evaluate remote consult solutions to **improve primary care access to specialist consultation;**
2. Improve the **quality and experience of care for patients and providers** using remote consultation; and
3. Build organizational **proficiency and capacity in quality improvement** and change management.

### ACTIONS TAKEN

The 15-month Collaborative supports 10 teams across seven jurisdictions in Canada, and one national team. The Collaborative includes in-person and web-based learning sessions, opportunities for continuous team cross sharing, coaching, educational materials and tools to support the design, implementation and evaluation of a remote consult service in each teams’ jurisdiction. Expert faculty include the BASE™ and RACE™ co-founders.

### PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Across the Collaborative, results to date have been very encouraging. Teams are measuring pre-agreed Collaborative-wide measures, and Collaborative co-designed surveys which are provided to patients, specialists and primary care providers.

While final reporting will be completed in March, 2019, preliminary data highlights the large reach and scope of the services engaged. Thus far, Collaborative successes and learnings include:

Most frequently engaged specialties across 12 services:	Number of teams engaging specialty
Psychiatry	9
Nephrology	7
Internal Medicine	7
Pediatrics	7
<b>Interim remote consult volume across 9 teams*:</b>	<b>2,985</b>

\*Calgary LINK, Fraser RACE, SK LINK, Newfoundland, Race North, Providence eCase, Interior EASE, Quebec, Manitoba (started in December 2018), from November 2017 – March 2018

#### Successes

- Stories of the road not traveled - patient stories where referrals were appropriately avoided and care was provided by the primary care provider (PCP), saving the patient time, money, travel, and waiting
- Improved provider-to-provider communications (an electronic ‘doctors lounge’), and opportunities for continuing education
- Showing the work as “developmental” rather than a “pilot”
- Demonstration of mutual, complimentary roles of different remote consult services, e.g. phone and eConsult

#### Key Lessons Learned

- Policy change, including physician remuneration, is key to ensuring sustainability
- Hands-on, multi-pronged recruitment to engage new providers, by a core team of patients, primary care and specialist champions, and influential advocates at all levels
- Importance of integrating service into current workflow and technology, with in-house IT support



**National**  
Canadian Forces Health Services

**British Columbia**  
1. Providence Health Care eCase team  
2. Fraser RaceApp Collaborative  
3. Interior EASE (Electronic Access to Specialist Expertise)  
4. Race™ North

**Alberta**  
Calgary Zone Specialty Integration

**Saskatchewan**  
LINK 2.0

**Manitoba**  
MB eConsult

**Quebec**  
BASE™ eConsult Quebec Project

**New Brunswick**  
eConsult NB

**Newfoundland**  
NL Base™ eConsult Team