



Power over pain: Managing patients with chronic pain

PANELISTS

Dr. Bryan MacLeod • Dr. Virginia McEwen • Dr. Arun Radhakrishnan

WITH

Dr. Stephanie Zhou • Dr. Nikki Bozinoff



Ontario College of
Family Physicians

**Practising
Well**
Share.
Inspire.
Connect.



Family & Community Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

February 28, 2024

Practising Well: Your Community of Practice

Please introduce yourself in the chat!

Your name,
Your community,
Your twitter handle



@OntarioCollege
#PractisingWell

Your Panelists: Disclosures

Dr. Bryan MacLeod

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Practising Well CoP speaker
- AFMC
- NOSM
- MERLIN 2020

Dr. Virginia McEwen

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Practising Well CoP speaker
- Northern Ontario Academic Medicine Association

Dr. Arun Radhakrishnan

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Practising Well CoP speaker
- Centre for Effective Practice
- Canadian College of Family Physicians
- Health Canada

Disclosures

Dr. Stephanie Zhou @stephanieyzhou

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Ontario College of Family Physicians – Practising Well Implementation Group Member, CoP Speaker
- Canadian Medical Association – Honoraria for practice management lectures
- Habitat for Humanity GTA – Board of Directors member
- Toronto Public Health – Board of Directors member

Dr. Nikki Bozinoff @NikkiBozinoff

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- Ontario College of Family Physicians – Practising Well Implementation Group Member, CoP Speaker
- CAMH
- Department of Family and Community Medicine (University of Toronto)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- Womenmind
- CIHR
- Academic Health Sciences Alternate Payment Plan

Disclosure of Financial Support

This program has received funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health and in-kind support from the Ontario College of Family Physicians and the Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Toronto.

Potential for conflict(s) of interest:

N/A

Mitigating Potential Bias

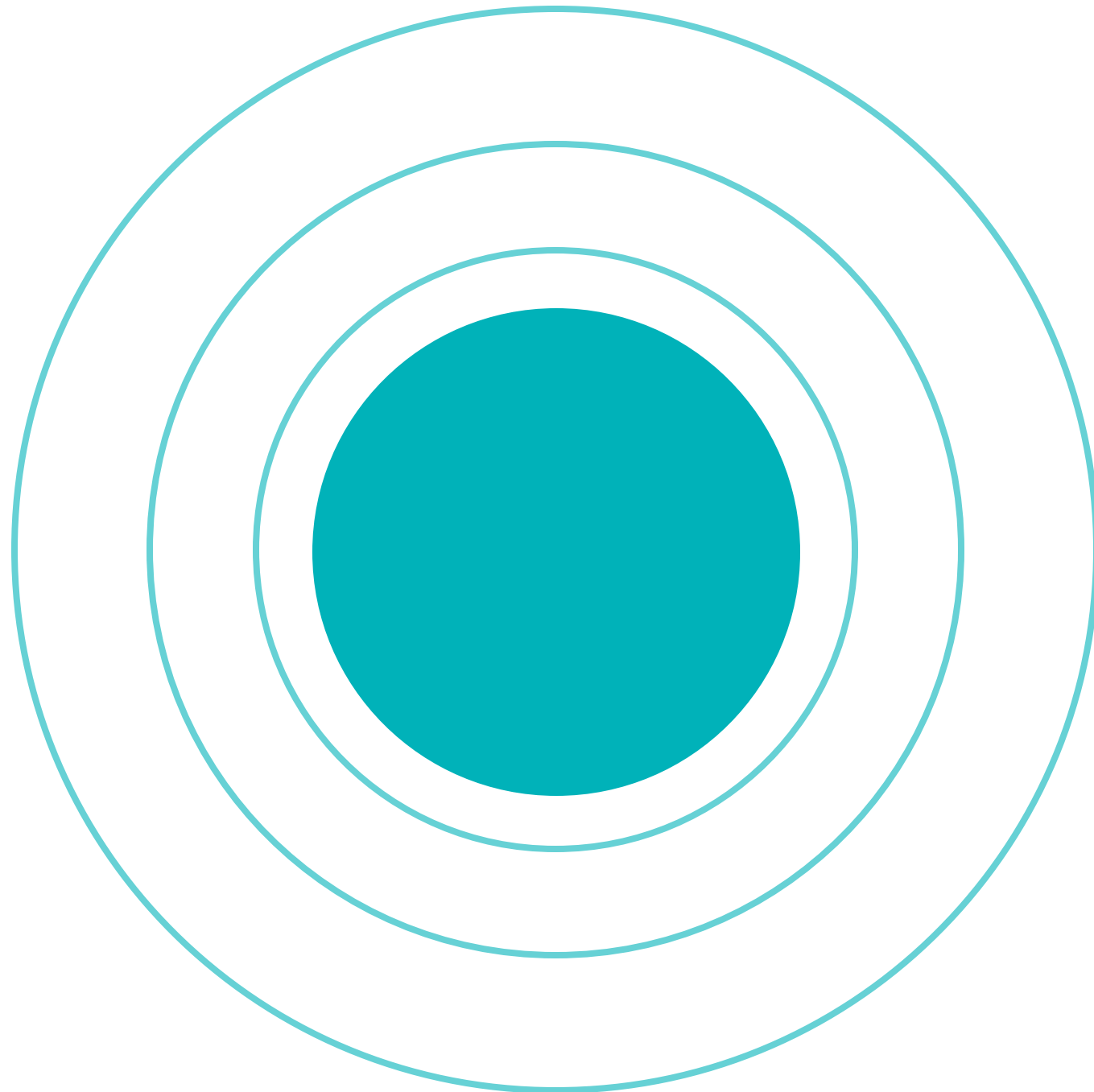
- The Scientific Planning Committee (SPC) has control over the choice of topics and speakers.
- Content has been developed according to the standards and expectations of the Mainpro+ certification program.
- The program content was reviewed by the SPC.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the lands on which we are hosting this meeting include the traditional territories of many nations.

The OCFP and DFCM recognizes that the many injustices experienced by the Indigenous Peoples of what we now call Canada continue to affect their health and well-being. The OCFP and DFCM respects that Indigenous people have rich cultural and traditional practices that have been known to improve health outcomes.

I invite all of us to reflect on the territories you are calling in from as we commit ourselves to gaining knowledge; forging a new, culturally safe relationship; and contributing to reconciliation.





Power over pain: Managing patients with chronic pain

You raised important questions we'll try to work through together today:

1. What are the most effective strategies for integrating complimentary therapies, such as CBT, physiotherapy, and massage, into the management plan for chronic pain patients, especially when faced with financial constraints or lack of private insurance coverage?
2. Considering the challenges posed by the opioid crisis, could you elaborate on the current alternatives for managing chronic pain effectively, including the role of non-opioid therapies and the potential for patient self-management techniques?
3. How can healthcare providers best approach the management of patients experiencing chronic pain alongside concurrent personality disorders, ensuring both psychological and physical aspects are addressed comprehensively?

And other questions you add in the Q&A box...





Power over pain: Managing patients with chronic pain

Your Panelists

Dr. Bryan MacLeod

Thunder Bay, ON

Dr. Virginia McEwen

Thunder Bay, ON

Dr. Arun Radhakrishnan

Ottawa, ON

Chronic Pain eConsults

Ontario eConsult Service (OTNhub)

July 2022 to June 2023



Speaker Disclosures



Dr. Bryan MacLeod, MD, CCFP, FCFP

Relationships with financial sponsors (including honoraria):

- OTN – e-consult chronic pain consultant
- AFMC – opioids, substance abuse and chronic pain curriculum
- OCFP – Alumni Practising Well Implementation Group member and information session speaker

eConsult: Case(s) in Chronic Pain

- **What eConsult is best at:**

- Concise specific single questions, not requiring a physical exam.

- So...

- 57 y.o. female, with chronic LBP, experiencing reduced benefit from her current opioid dose of LA Morphine 30mg po bid..

- What are the options for a different LA opioid and how do we calculate to convert her over?

- **What your reality is:**

- 57 y.o. female, w/ chronic LBP & whiplash following MVC in 2011.

- NEW to your practice

- Finding reduced benefit from 600mg codeine/day

- Clonazepam 0.5mg po prn

- Experienced “reactions” to other meds [pregabalin (wt gain), amitriptyline (increased pain)]

- Significant psychosocial factors limiting travel to larger center for team consult.

Snapshot of Ontario eConsult Program

July 2022 to June 2023

7.17
eConsults per 1000 People

108,301
eConsults sent across all services

10,555
eConsults sent in the last month

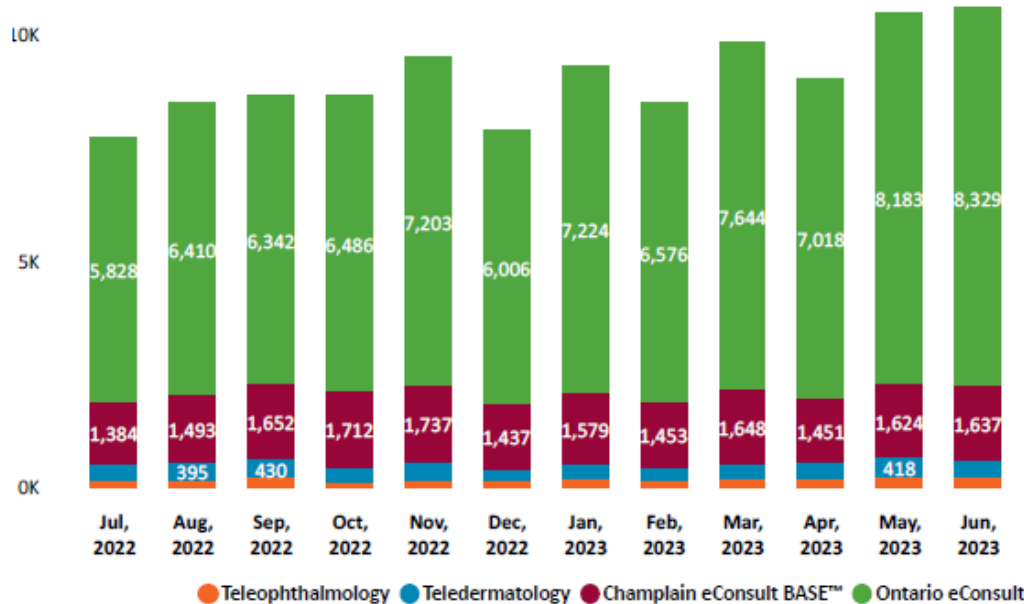
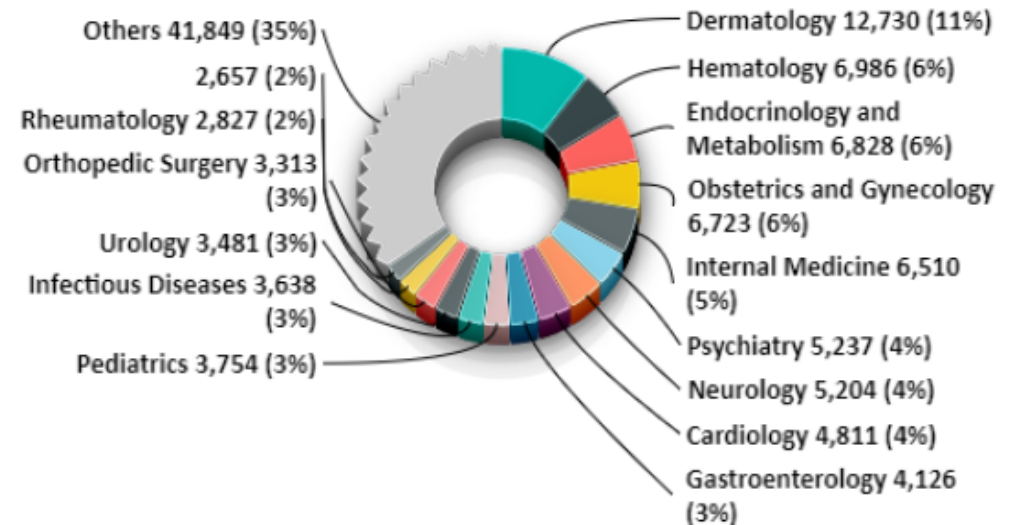
Growth Over Time eConsults per month

4,301 active¹
referrers

Top Specialties³



1,179 active¹
specialists



Total Population
15,109,416

Ontario eConsult Service
83,249

Champlain eConsult BASE™
18,807

Teledermatology
4,188

Teleophthalmology
2,057

1. Active means participated in three or more eConsults in the past six months. Active participants are from Ontario eConsult Service, Champlain eConsultBASE™, and Teledermatology

2. Population estimates from Statistics Canada (2016 Census and administrative data)

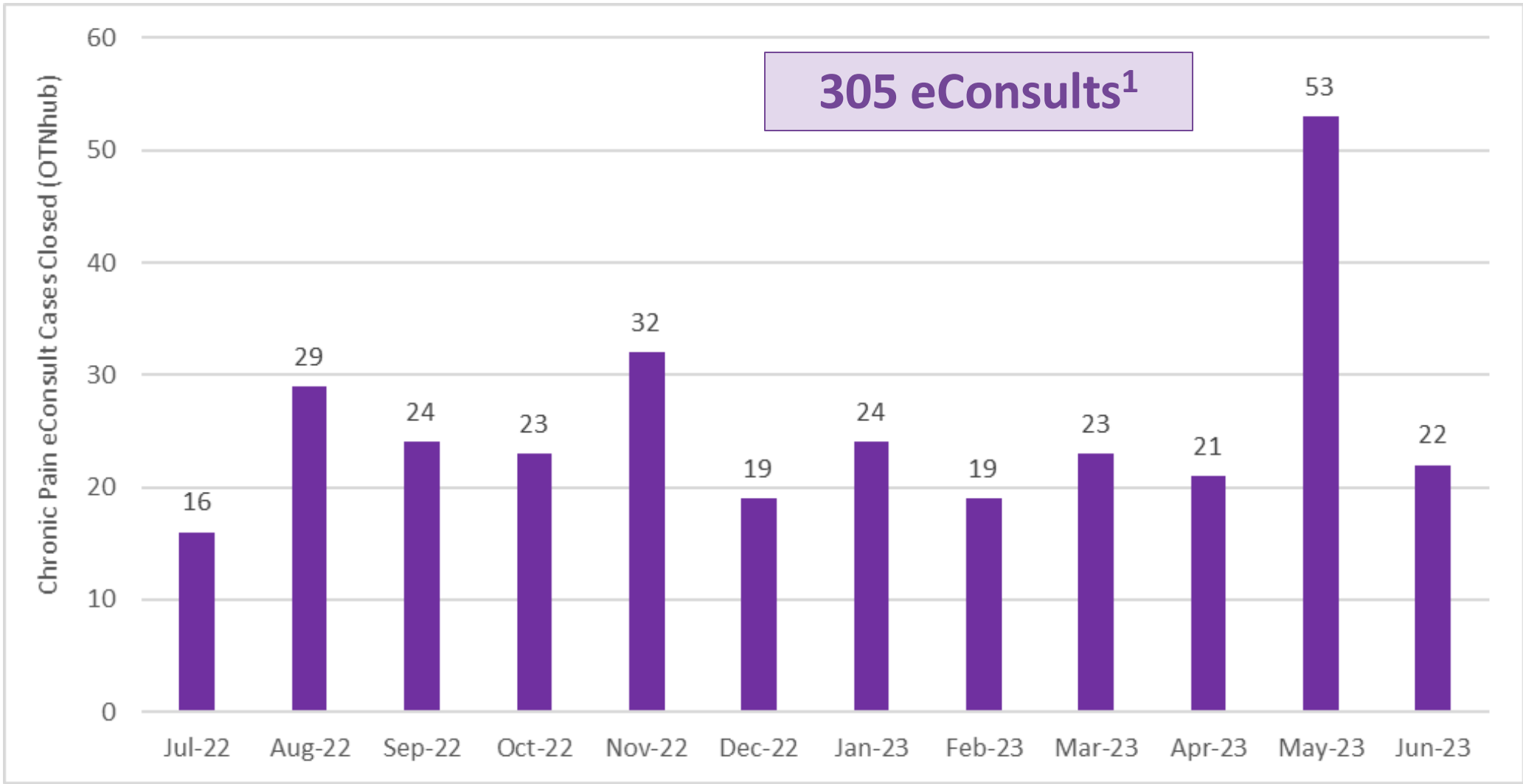
3. Based on Ontario eConsult Service only.

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Chronic Pain eConsults

Ontario eConsult Service (OTNhub)

July 2022 to June 2023



1. eConsult cases submitted to pain medicine groups or specialists and closed on the Ontario eConsult Service between July 2022 and June 2023.

Chronic Pain eConsults

Ontario eConsult Service (OTNhub)

July 2022 to June 2023

305 eConsults¹

246 Requesting Providers²
Sent 1 or more eConsults

19 Specialists Answered
1 or more eConsults



1.26 Days

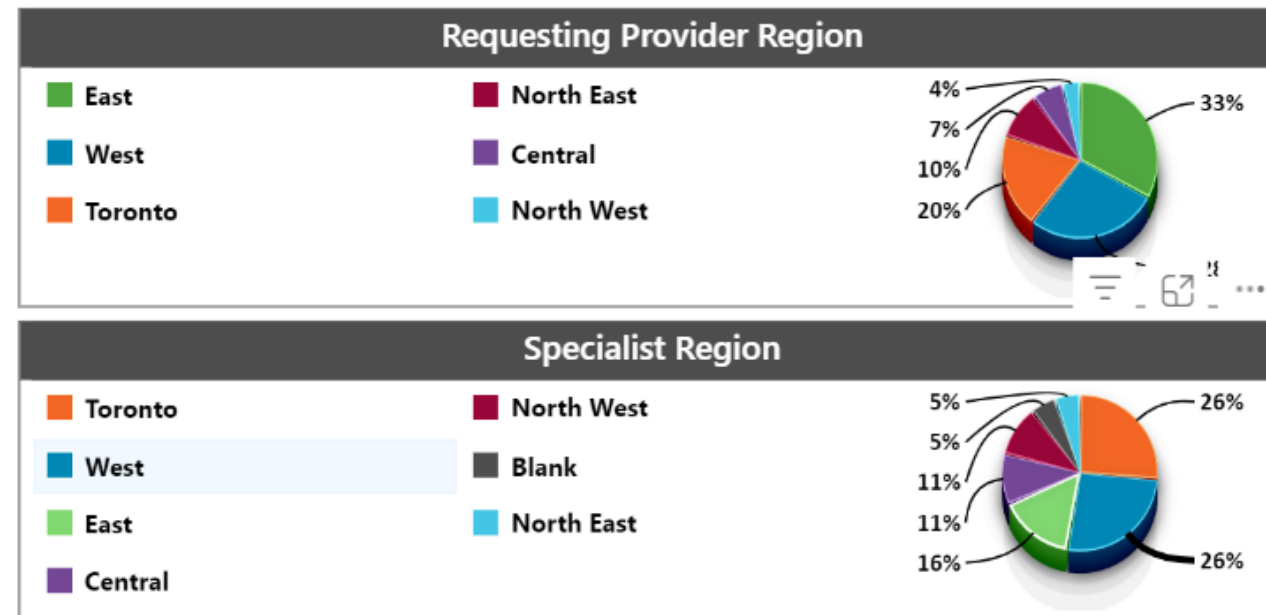
Median Specialist Response Time

32 Minutes

Median Specialist Time Billed

\$117.33

Median Cost per eConsult



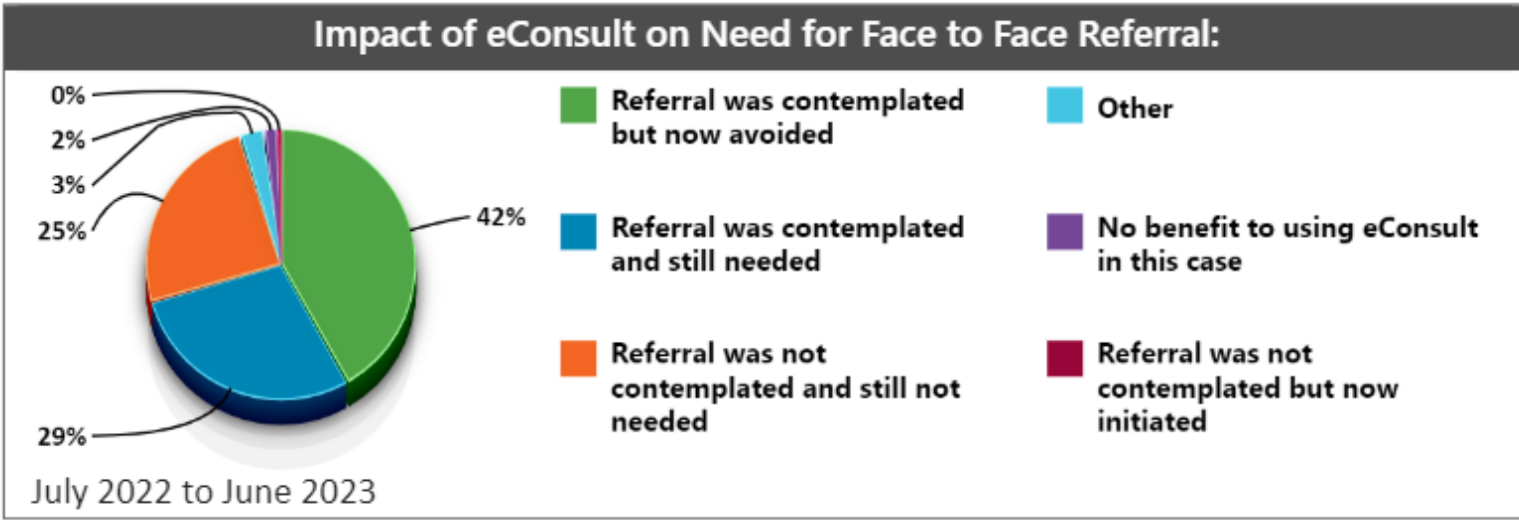
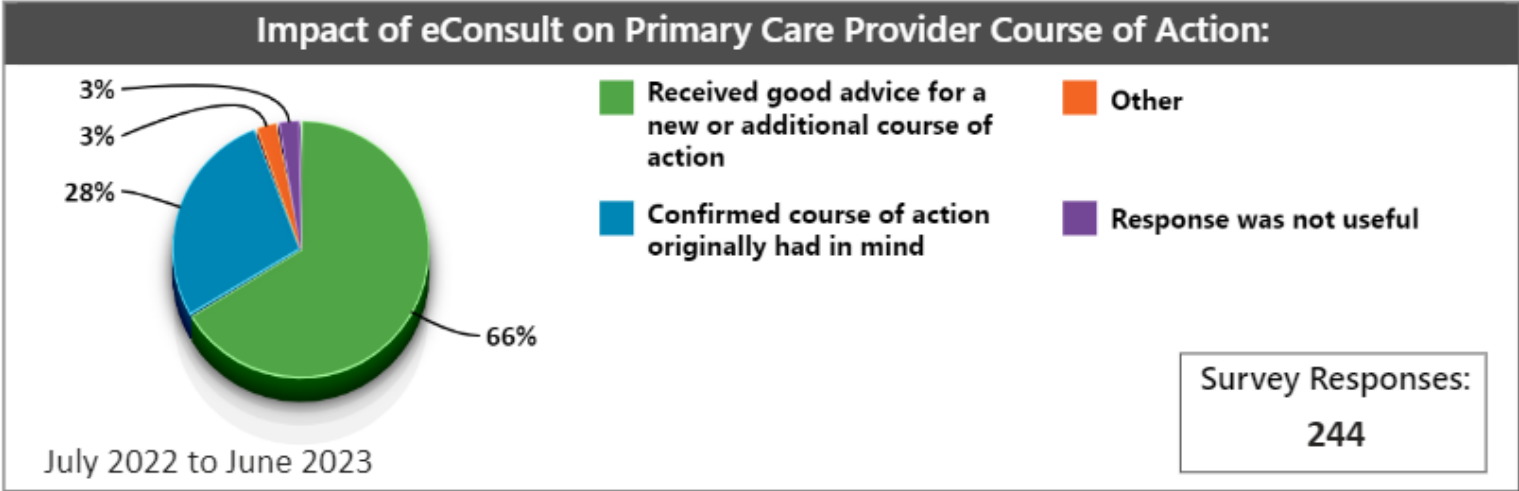
1. eConsult cases submitted to pain medicine groups or specialists and closed on the Ontario eConsult Service between July 2022 and June 2023.

2. Requesting providers include family physicians, nurse practitioners, and specialists

Requesting Provider Close-Out Survey Results - Chronic Pain eConsults

Ontario eConsult Service (OTNhub)

July 2022 to June 2023



*Based on 244 eConsults submitted to pain medicine groups or specialists and closed on the Ontario eConsult Service with survey results (no blanks) between July 2022 and June 2023.

What makes for a good e-consult?

What eConsult does well:

- **Rapid response within one week of posting**
- **Gives primary care clinicians rapid access to dozens of specialists.**
- Specific questions about medication options and titration
- Suggestions for maximizing local or online resources.
- Managing Opioids
 - Weaning
 - UDS/T
 - Opioid rotation

What eConsult Can't do:


- Anything requiring hands-on physical exam
- Developing global and yet specific plans of management (here's their life history "figure them out"...
- Suggestions regarding interventional referrals (again often requires physical)
- Urgent or emergent cases
- We are not the Champlain (Ottawa) e-consult service. 😊

Some Key Questions to ask all Chronic Pain Patients

1. What are your patients' goals? If they are expecting zero pain, then some education needed.. have you done [SMART goals](#) following achievable functional end points?
2. What does their day look like... if lying in bed all day, again that will need to be addressed.
3. are there psychological diagnoses? Depression? PTSD? Anxiety?
 - a. Do they have a counsellor?
 - b. What is sleep like for them? Nightmares? Sleep apnea symptoms?
 - c. Challenges with chemical coping? History of SUD?
4. Could you have her complete a [Brief Pain Inventory](#), if you haven't already? I am curious to see her pain patterning...
5. Can you break down their pain a little more? Aggravating & relieving factors (mores specific than lying still vs moving)? Associated symptoms? [PQRST**](#) Such as Mornings stiffness? Fevers? Associated GI, dermal, ocular or bowel symptoms/Dx? And triggers/onset/duration/time of day?
6. Are they [hypermobile](#)?
7. Finally does he have [catastrophization \(scoring\)](#) or [kinesiophobia](#)?. With either, it's hard to move ahead until they are addressed.

How to Sign Up:

- To ask for an e-consult sign up by clicking on this icon and following the instructions:



Signing Up for an OTNhub Account


The Ontario eConsult Service, accessed on the OTNhub and a part of the **Ontario eServices Program**, is a secure web-based tool, that allows physicians and nurse practitioners timely access to specialist advice.

Sign up for an OTNhub account at www.otnhub.ca and send an eConsult today!

What do I need?

- OneID login credentials
 - If you are an MD, you can create your OneID credentials through your CPSP Member Portal
 - If you are an NP, an eHealth Local Registration Authority can assist you. Contact us at eConsultCOE@toh.ca if you need assistance.
- OTNhub account
 - Account Type Options: Individual (Solo)/Private Practice or associated with an OTN Member Organization
- Access to compatible web browsers
 - Google Chrome 72+, Mozilla Firefox 60+ ESR, Microsoft Edge 79+, or Apple Safari 12+
 - OTNhub allows for exporting of PDF copies of eConsults - [get Adobe Reader](#)
 - [Click here for more information on system requirements and technical features](#)
 - Ontario eConsult Service is integrated with some EMRs, led by OntarioMD. Contact us at eConsultCOE@toh.ca for more information.

What type of account should I get?

<p>Are you a...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">private practice run by a physician or nurse practitionerprovider who does not wish to have their account associated with a specific organizationprovider who changes organizations frequently (e.g. locums)provider who works at multiple organizations and who is not using delegate support	<p>OR</p> 	<p>Are you a...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">provider who works at a health care organization such as a hospital, or family health teamprovider who wishes to associate their account with their health care organizationprovider who works at a health care organization who leverages delegate support
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Individual (Solo)/ Private Practice Account

Fill out the Private Practice Sign Up Form: <https://www.ontario.ca/2019/04/15/sign-up-to-get-started-today/>


*To get an individual (solo)/private practice account you need to receive 50% or more of their annual funding through OHIP, MCH or OHIP (i.e. not privately funded)

OTN Member Organizational Account


If your organization is already an OTN Member Organization, log into www.otnhub.ca and log in using your OneID credentials to get started today.

If your organization would like to get set up as an OTN Member Organization, identify your organization's legal signing authority and click here: <https://www.ontario.ca/econsult/>

*To check if your organization is already set up as an OTN Member Organization, click here: <https://www.ontario.ca/econsult/>




Need help getting set up for Ontario eConsult on the OTNhub? Fill out our [intake form](#) or contact us at eConsultCOE@toh.ca

Are you in a focused practice or providing specialty services and want to offer e-consults? Then Click: 

Go to specialists to this page on our website: [Specialists - eConsult \(econsultontario.ca\)](#)

And OTN has a one pager that has good information: [eConsult-FactSheet-Specialist-EN-FINAL-2023.pdf \(econsultontario.ca\)](#)



Specialist sign-up for Ontario eConsult

The Ontario eConsult Service, accessed on the OTNhub and a part of the **Ontario eServices Program**, is a secure web-based tool, that allows clinicians timely access to specialist advice.

Register now to provide timely advice to clinicians across Ontario.

Do I Qualify?

Do you...

- hold a valid certificate of registration with CPSP and your registration is in good standing?
- have a primary practice location in Ontario (listed on CPSP)?
- hold a completed certification in the specialty that you wish to provide eConsults?
 - Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RCPCSC)
 - Certificate of Added Competence
 - Focused Practice Designation
- Special permission, based on scope of practice and recognition of expertise [Click here](#) for more information about specialist eligibility.

Are you...

- Committed to providing timely advice to requesting clinicians (within 7 days)?
- Committed to providing a collegial and educational response to requesting clinicians based on patient-specific information provided in their consult?
- Committed to providing helpful, patient-specific advice, including recommendations & anticipatory guidance?

Eligible specialists are set up on the OTNhub to receive cases Direct to Specialist. Some specialists may be asked to participate in regional or provincial groups of specialists (eConsult BASESM Managed Specialty Groups).

Setting Up Specialist Access

- Create an OTNhub account.**

If you would like assistance with getting your OTNhub account created, please fill out our [specialist intake form](#) to be contacted by your regional deployment team member.

 - Create OneID login credentials. OneID credentials can be created through the CPSP Member Portal.
 - Create OTNhub account. Account Type Options: Individual (Solo)/Private Practice or associated with an OTN Member Organization.

Once your OTNhub account has been created, you will be granted access to send an eConsult right away.
- Receive Specialist Access.**

To have specialist permissions added to your OTNhub account please complete the [specialist intake form](#) or email eConsultCOE@toh.ca.

Our team will:

 - Review your credentials to grant specialist permissions.
 - Request specialist access to be added to your account (3-5 days).

Once specialist permissions have been granted, you can receive and respond to eConsult cases!
- Setting up payment.**

Eligible specialists are compensated by the eConsult Centre of Excellence at a pro-rated hourly rate and are paid out quarterly or remunerated by a CHSP Billing code (dermatology).

 - Specialists will be connected to the eConsult Centre of Excellence to set up remuneration.
 - Specialists will be asked to select and complete the payment request form, appropriate for their payment preference/modal.

How do I Receive Cases?

Direct to Specialist

- Senders choose the specialist, by name, using the specific provider or group option, on the OTNhub.
- Increase your visibility on the OTNhub: [Top and Tracks for Specialists](#)

Regional or Provincial eConsult BASESM Managed Specialty Group


- Senders choose the specialty from a drop-down menu, from the BASE Managed Specialty option, on the OTNhub.
- Cases are automatically assigned to the next available specialist, within the group.
- Specialists are added to regional or provincial groups on an as-needed basis.

Specialist Resources

[Click here](#) for a video on how to manage eConsult cases.

For a [week](#) overview of Specialist Best Practices to providing eConsults, click [here](#).

To modify your eConsult case management preferences, including selecting maximum case volumes and setting availability, please click [here](#).



Need help getting set up to receive eConsult cases on the OTNhub? Fill out our [intake form](#) or contact us at eConsultCOE@toh.ca



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Clinical Tools for Chronic Pain

Arun Radhakrishnan

February 28, 2024





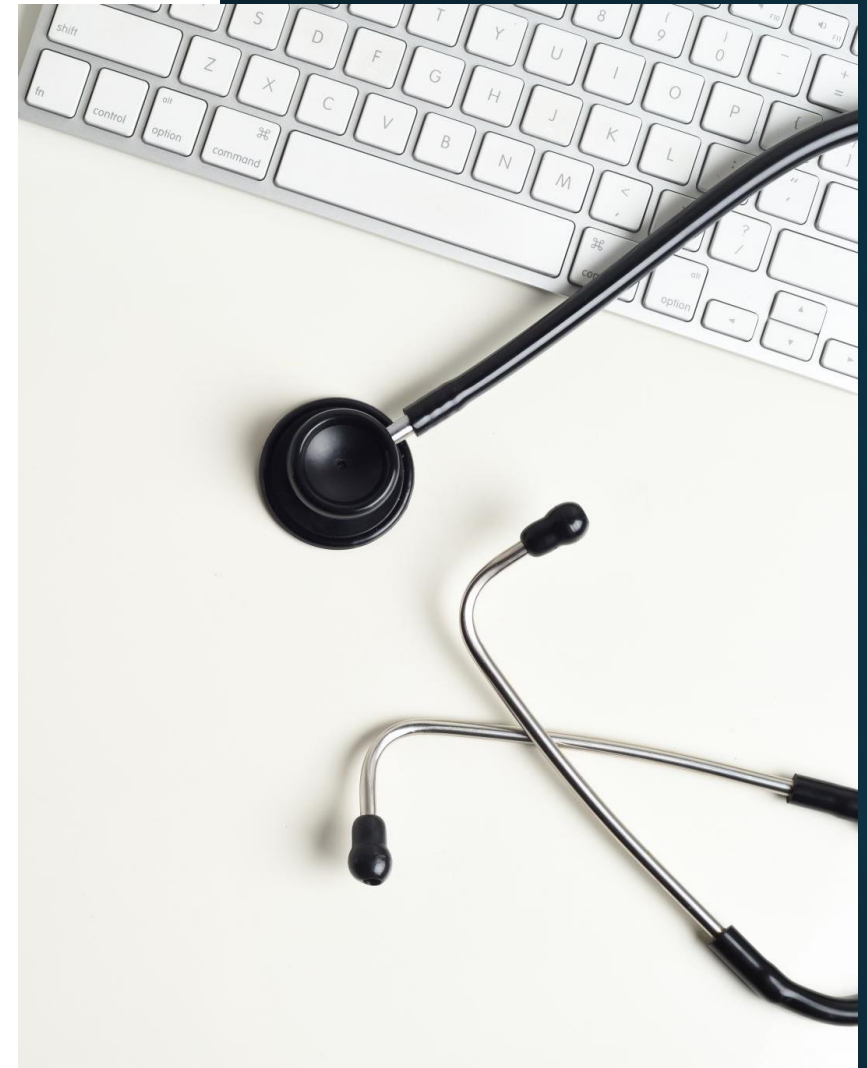
Background

- Centre for Effective Practice
- Provincial and Federal funding to build clinical tools
 - KT in PC
 - Substance Use and Addiction Program

Point of care tools

- CNCP
- Low back
- Neck pain and Headache Navigator
- OA
- Opioid Manager
- Opioid Tapering

<https://cep.health/tools/>



Clinical Decision Support System



EMR based Clinical Decision Support System

Health Canada Funded pilot – 2024
Support documenting and decision making
Support to integrate in your EMR
Telus PS Suite
Best Practices



Process

Literature reviews – guidelines
National advisory
User and Pilot testing





Release

April 2024

Last visit: First visit: **Management of CNCP Form**

Work with your patients to identify and understand the complex bio-psycho-social elements involved in their pain and emphasize the value of a multi-modal approach to manage their pain. Management is often a process of repeated trials to determine the effects of specific treatments and can take a few months or years to optimize. Once a treatment plan is identified, initiate, adapt and evaluate how it improves daily function, pain, mood and quality of life, while assessing the risks/benefits for long-term use. It is also important to optimally manage any active underlying health issues related to a patient's pain (e.g., diabetes, inflammatory arthritis).

Legend

-  More information
-  Talking tip

Dashboard**Pain Summary****Relevant Past Medical History****Pain Related Investigations / Consults**

pilot test version

Headaches Osteoarthritis (OA) Low Back Pain (LBP) Myofascial Pain Fibromyalgia (FM) Neuropathic Pain Other **Vitals**BP: HR: RR: **Metrics****Latest value****Date****Frequency (months)****Update:**

Metrics	Latest value	Date	Frequency (months)	Update:
Pain Severity Score	never done	due	3	Open BPI Tool
Pain Interference Score	never done		1	Open BPI Tool
PHQ-9	never done		12	Open PHQ-9 Tool
GAD-7	never done		12	Open GAD-7 Tool
UDS	never done		12	Open Lab Req

Assessment**Management: General****Management: Non-Pharmacological****Management: Pharmacological****Patient Resources**[Copy section from prior visit](#)**Main reason for visit:****Subjective Pain Information:****Brief Pain Inventory (BPI)**

The sole focus on pain scales is controversial. The main focus should be coping with pain and the impact on daily function and activities.

[Open BPI assessment tool](#)Score: Pain Severity Score: Pain Interference Score: **Physical exam:**

How might I use it

- Adult chronic pain in primary care –FM, LBP
- Multidimensional assessment – validated tools
- Supports documentation
- Education

How might I use it

- Resources
- Multimodal management
- Monitor and adjust – previous treatments
- Communications and information

Assessment **Management: General** **Management: Non-Pharmacological** **Management: Pharmacological** **Patient Resources**

Select the resources below that you would like to share with the patient. You can also click the links below to open the resource to print or share via email.

- Introduction to Mindfulness for Chronic Pain [Visit webpage](#)
- Power over pain [Visit webpage](#)
- Understanding and rethinking chronic pain for patients [Visit webpage](#)
- Exercise videos (Pain BC) [Visit webpage](#)
- Exercise videos (Dr Andrea Furlan) [Visit webpage](#)
- Understanding low back pain (Dr. Mike Evans) [Visit webpage](#)
- RAC LBP Exercise videos [Visit webpage](#)
- Ecouch [Visit webpage](#)
- Fact Sheet: Chronic Pain (PDF) [Visit webpage](#)
- The Arthritis Society of Canada: managing Chronic Pain [Visit webpage](#)
- RNAO Fact Sheet: Helping people manage their pain [Visit webpage](#)
- Canadian Pain Coalitions- Pain Resource Centre [Visit webpage](#)
- Prescription opioids: What you need to know (CDC) [Visit webpage](#)
- Messages for patients taking opioids (McMaster University) [Visit webpage](#)
- Best Advice for people taking opioid medications (Mike Evans) [Visit webpage](#)
- Opioid Pain Medicines Information for Patients and Families (ISMP Canada Opioid Stewardship) [Visit webpage](#)

[Copy section from prior visit](#)

[Print or Email](#)

Assessment **Management: General** **Management: Non-Pharmacological** **Management: Pharmacological** **Patient Resources**

[Copy section from prior visit](#)

Non-pharmacological treatments should be considered for all patients with CNCP. Choose treatments that you and the patient feel comfortable with and then initiate, adapt, and evaluate the treatment plan (use motivational interviewing techniques, as appropriate).

Discussed and counselled patient on:

Physical activity  

«Recommended general activity and exercise therapies » «Recommended» «home and group physical activities» «Recommended low impact physical activity» «Encouraged pt to continue with the following: walking» «pilates» «Tai Chi» «yoga» «aquatic therapy» «Pt education: Start low and go slow (e.g. 5 min every other day) and aim for a moderate level of intensity of activity» «Encourage graded activity by:» «referral to physiotherapist»

Psychological therapies (indicated for: FM, LBP, headaches, OA, neck pain, rheumatoid arthritis, NP) 

«Recommended:» «Encouraged ongoing use of:» «CBT,» «Mindfulness Based Intervention (MBI),» «Acceptance Commitment Therapy (ACT),» «Respondent Behavioural Therapy» «Recommended:» «breathing exercises and techniques» «Referral to:» «psychotherapist,» «social worker,» «occupational therapist,» «other_____»

Self-management Therapies (indicated for: FM, LBP, headaches, OA, neck pain, rheumatoid arthritis, NP) 

«Recommended self-management program to complement other therapies» «Encouraged ongoing use of strategies from self management program» «Program details:»

Physical therapy (indicated for: LBP, neck pain, neuropathic pain) 

«Recommended» «Encouraged continued use of the following for short-term relief of pain:» «Manual therapy» «TENS» «Low level laser therapy» «referral to:» «physiotherapist,» «chiropractor» «osteopath»

For details on the types of activities, their benefits / role, and level of evidence, see [Appendix A](#)

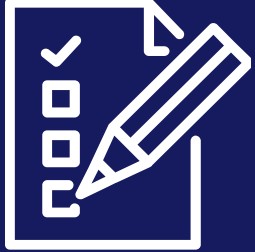
Additional notes

Questions



Resources

Tools



Links to resources shared today will be sent to participants following the session.

Tools and Resources

Resource	Type	Link
Chronic Pain	Ontario Health Quality Standards	https://www.hqontario.ca/evidence-to-improve-care/quality-standards/view-all-quality-standards/chronic-pain
Opioid Prescribing for Chronic Pain	Ontario Health Quality Standards	https://www.hqontario.ca/evidence-to-improve-care/quality-standards/view-all-quality-standards/opioid-prescribing-for-chronic-pain
Ontario eConsult Centre of Excellence	EConsult Service	https://www.otn.ca/
Power Over Pain Portal	Resources	https://poweroverpain.ca/
Centre for Effective Practice – Clinical Tools and Resources	Clinical Tools and Resources	https://cep.health/tools/

Resources

Education



Links to resources shared today will be sent to participants following the session.

Practising Well CoP – Self Learning Program

The Practising Well CoP is now certified for self learning credits!

Earn **1-credit-per-hour** for reviewing the recording and resources from **past CoP sessions**. The self learning program is certified for up to 38 Mainpro+ credits.



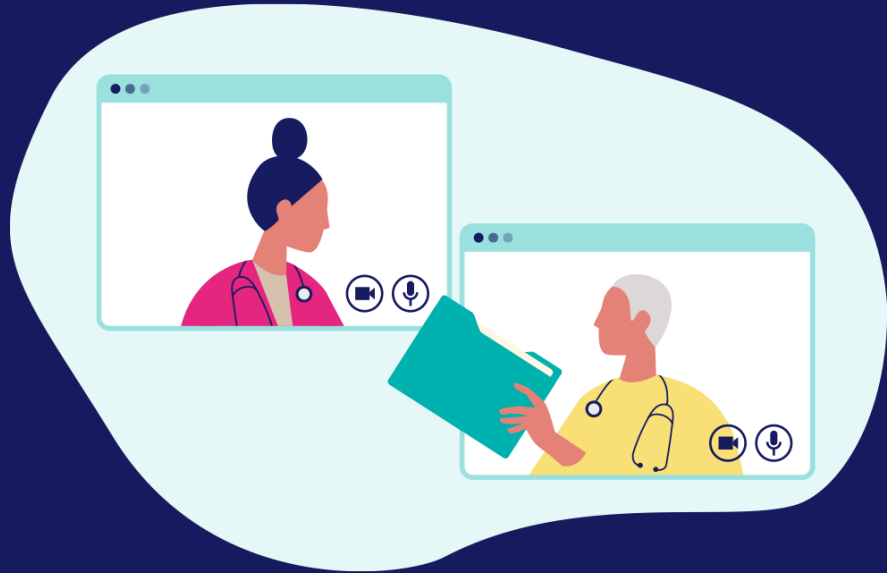
For more information and to participate:

<https://www.ontariofamilyphysicians.ca/education-practice-supports/practising-well/practising-well-community-of-practice/practising-well-cop-self-learning-program>

Peer Connect

Have questions about chronic pain management?

Connect with a Peer Guide for more individualized educational support.



Dr. Gregory Hariton

[Connect Now!](#)



Dr. Bryan MacLeod

[Connect Now!](#)



Dr. Caroline Kargel

[Connect Now!](#)



Dr. Paul Hoogeveen

[Connect Now!](#)



Elevating Excellence: Mentorship Development in Family Medicine

Growing your skillset in adult learning principles, navigating complexity, and wellness



Learn about **group facilitation** in this new [self-learning program](#) and earn **1-credit-per hour**.

More topics will be added in 2024!

<https://ontariofamilyphysicians.ca/supports-for-family-doctors/mental-health-and-addictions-supports/peer-connect-mentorship/elevating-excellence/>

Nominate a colleague for an **OCFP Award starting on** **February 29!**

- ✓ Celebrate their dedication
- ✓ Recognize their impact
- ✓ Inspire others



Resources

Supports



Links to resources shared today will be sent to participants following the session.

Writing Sick Notes

To help educate employers on changing their policies, the OCFP has created this resource for use in your EMRs and clinic workflows for sick notes.

Did you know that most employers in Ontario have eliminated the requirement for sick notes for short illnesses?

While the *Employment Standards Act* permits employers to ask employees for medical notes when taking sick leave, **it is not a requirement of the Act for employers to ask their employees to provide a medical note.** In fact, other provinces have amended their legislation to prohibit employers from doing so.

HERE'S WHY YOUR ORGANIZATION SHOULD RECONSIDER REQUIRING SICK NOTES:



Sick notes impact employee and economic productivity. Many employees would rather go to work ill than spend the time and money getting a sick note, leading to illness spreading in the workplace.



Sick notes strain healthcare resources and take time from patients who need urgent care. Patients should see a doctor only if they require medical care—most common illnesses can be managed at home.



Sick employees should stay home. Travelling to a doctor's appointment or emergency department for a sick note hinders recovery and **needlessly exposes vulnerable patients and healthcare providers to illness.**



Doctors rely on patient's self-reporting of their illness and may not be able to verify it from a medical standpoint.



Many patients are **charged a fee** for sick notes because OHIP does not compensate doctors for providing this non-medical service.



Some patients can't access a doctor during their illness. There is a shortage of family doctors in Ontario. As a result, some patients are unable to get a timely appointment. Over 2 million Ontarians don't have a family doctor at all, and must seek care (and sick notes) through walk-in clinics and emergency departments.



Resources to support your practice

Changes to the CPSO *Continuity of Care: Advice to the Profession*

These updates provide greater clarity around administrative responsibilities for specialists and emphasize clear communication between consultants and family physicians.

What you need to know:

What you need to know: _____


CHANGES TO THE CPSO ADVICE TO THE PROFESSION: CONTINUITY OF CARE

REFERRALS

- It is important for family physicians to consider whether a patient's condition is within the specialist's **scope of practice**, whether the specialist is **accepting patients** and whether the specialist's practice is **accessible to the patient**.
- Family physicians must include all the information necessary for the specialist to understand the patient's condition and address the questions or concerns they are being asked to consider.
- Specialists can support family physicians by **accepting consultation requests**, where possible, **even if there are minor issues** with the requests (e.g., incorrect or outdated referral forms).
- Specialists can decline referrals that do not provide sufficient information, but they must **communicate their reasons** to the family physician. **Rather than requiring a new referral**, there may be **opportunities** for the specialist to work with the family physician to **clarify any outstanding questions**.
- Acknowledging a referral simply means informing the family physician whether the referral will be accepted**. If it is accepted, specialists can indicate the estimated or actual appointment date. There is no requirement to see the patient **within 14 days**, just a requirement to **review the referral and close the loop**.
- Specialists may have more information about their colleagues than family physicians do. If they are able to **assist in re-directing the referral**, it would be helpful to do so, especially where the referral is for urgent or unique issues.


While the type of information that could be included in a referral request is outlined in the **Transitions in Care Policy**, the updated advice notes that it is **up to family physicians to determine what is appropriate** in the circumstances.

The CPSO encourages specialists to be flexible and collaborative with referrals to facilitate smoother coordination and continuity of care; noting that **family physicians and specialists share responsibility for ensuring patients can access the care they need**.

 **Referrals Checklist (OMA)**
Continuity of Care: Guide for Patients and Caregivers
(CPSO)

The updated advice explicitly reminds specialists of the **requirement for timely acknowledgement of referrals within 14 days** to ensure patient care is not delayed.

While specialists have no obligation to suggest another provider if they're unable to accept the referral, the CPSO encourages doing so to help ensure timely patient care.

Ontario College of Family Physicians  02

Letter Templates

1. REFERRALS
2. ORDERING TESTS
3. REVIEWING TESTS
4. REFERRAL TO SUB-SPECIALISTS
5. CONSULT NOTES & DISCHARGE SUMMARIES

02 Ordering Tests

Insert practice name & information

Dear Dr. (insert name),

Re: (patient identifier)

Thank you for your thorough and helpful consultation note on the above-mentioned patient. Although I am always eager to collaborate with you in the care of our mutual patients, I will leave the ordering of investigations you recommended in your consult to you.

Include the relevant tests and imaging, where applicable

You'll note that the recently updated advice from **CPSO on Continuity of Care** explicitly clarified that: *"Any physician who determines a test is needed is responsible for ordering that test, including tracking the results and managing any follow up that stems from that test. By ordering tests that they themselves have deemed necessary, physicians ensure that patient care is not unnecessarily delayed, and that their colleagues are not required to receive results or manage care that falls outside their scope of practice."*

Include the following, if desired: I appreciate being copied to receive test results; however, as per the CPSO "it should be clear that I have no additional responsibilities in regard to the tests or results."

Your expertise in this specialized area is greatly appreciated. Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Dr. (insert name)

Resources

Supports



OMA Physician Health Program

<https://php.oma.org>

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Health Care Provider (HCP) Resource
Site

<http://www.camh.ca/covid19hcw>

CMA Wellness Hub

<https://www.cma.ca/physician-wellness-hub>



- PARO 24/7 Helpline for Residents, Family Members, Medical Students
- 1-866-HELP-DOC



- <https://www.ontario.ca/#support-health-care-worker>
 - Self-led / With peers / Talk to a clinician
- [Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences, Whitby](#)
- [St. Joseph's Healthcare, Hamilton](#)
- [The Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, Ottawa](#)
- [Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care, Penetanguishene](#)
- [Centre for Addictions and Mental Health \(CAMH\), Toronto](#)



- ECHO Coping with COVID
 - for health providers (educational credits)
 - Fridays 2-3pm EST
- <https://camh.echoontario.ca/echo-coping-with-covid/>

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