

## Case study

# A practice review.

**Rosedean House Surgery in Liskeard has a list size of 9,300 covering a rural area of 300 square miles. We offer a wide range of medical services, including routine GP appointments, home visits, chronic disease management, immunisations and vaccinations, contraceptive services, wound management, minor surgery and “on the day” appointments for patients with acute medical needs.**

Over the years we have seen our patient list grow and patients’ needs have changed. In order to meet the growing demand, at a time of diminishing resources, we have had to work smarter and more innovatively.

When the opportunity arose to be part of the, we were keen to sign up. Our hope was to offer a new way for patients to contact us without the traditional, sometimes lengthy, wait for an appointment. Our clinicians felt many issues could be handled without the patient needing to attend the practice in person.

eConsult allows patients to contact us when it suits them, with assurance of a response by the end of the next working day. Our goal was to enable the GPs to handle one or two eConsults in the time of a single appointment or telephone call. The GP would have the pertinent clinical information to hand, from the eConsult report, and the clinical details would already be recorded in the patients’ record. Not only could we handle our work more efficiently, provision would be more dynamic from a patient point of view.

We opted for a ‘soft launch’ because we weren’t sure what uptake would be like and wanted time to test our processes. We put a poster up in reception and displayed leaflets around the practice. We put the software on our website and announced it ‘quietly’ on our Facebook page. The page had, at the time, circa 350 followers. The post was viewed by over 3,000 people thanks to followers sharing it. In week two, we posted an update on how the first week had gone (21 eConsults received), which received very positive response. After that we added a message to our telephone system and our patient advisors started to tell patients about the service.

The transition to receiving e-Consults has been very smooth. We integrated the handling of eConsult requests into our existing processes, including a reporting procedure to monitor activity and outcomes. Our team actively engaged in the roll-out, with everyone encouraging patients to use it. Health care assistants and nurses are recommending it for patients to get their blood tests results, dispensary staff are suggesting it for medication queries, doctors have asked patients to use it to update on their condition to ensure treatment is working and sick note requests can also be made. All at a convenient time for patients and without the need for them to call or attend the practice.



This active encouragement by our whole team has significantly helped to engage patients. A GP or nurse encouraging a patient to use the system means they are more likely to use it. Our Patient Participation Group has also been very supportive. Where possible, they have encouraged patients to try the service - highlighting its benefits.

In the first six weeks of offering eConsult, we received 145 requests, with even more patients receiving self-care advice or being sign posted to other services such as local pharmacies or support groups. We have tracked the outcomes from these consultations and the majority were handled with a brief action, such as a prescription, sick note or email back with information or advice. Where the GP felt a consultation was appropriate, they called the patient or invited them in for a face to face appointment. These patients were assessed and seen sooner than if they’d booked a routine appointment. The majority of patients received the care and advice that they needed without interrupting their regular routine to attend an appointment at the practice.

We are still continuing to see the benefits. We understand it’s not suited for all patients or conditions. But we feel that by offering eConsult, we are providing an enhanced service to our patients. As a result, we are managing our workload more effectively, which in turn means our patients are receiving a better service. We look forward to continuing to raise the awareness of eConsult to more patients as we move forward.