

Implementing a Clinical Electronic Consultation "eConsult" Platform

Nationwide, safety net healthcare delivery systems are adopting and optimizing electronic consultation "eConsult" technology, facilitating patient-specific clinical dialog between primary care and specialty providers on a shared platform. Our seven insights, grounded in hands-on experience with eConsult vendors and stakeholders address the adoption of eConsult within the safety net delivery systems.

1 Metrics are Key. Delivery systems invest in an eConsult platform to reduce unnecessary specialty appointments, provide communication exchange with primary care physicians and specialists, facilitate a better care experience for patients, and improve patients' clinical outcomes. Establishing a dashboard comparing baseline data with outcomes enables the delivery system to measure the operational and clinical impact, calculate financial benefits, and trend optimization efforts over time.

2 Meaningful Provider Engagement is the Backbone. Identify and engage a clinician-based core team at the beginning of the eConsult implementation and seek consensus on the need (problems being solved), value (benefits to the delivery system stakeholders) and effort (team commitment). Ensure the clinicians contribute to each phase: requirements gathering, vendor selection, testing, training, implementation and optimization.

3 Executive Champions are the Drivers. Executive champions from technology, operations and medical leadership areas must be in close alignment in the prioritization of the eConsult initiative relative to other change projects. Without this triad of affiliated executive champions, as well as full CEO support, the eConsult implementation will face significant challenges to achieve large-scale system, process and provider practice changes.

4 Early Protocols from End Users is Essential. The expertise and feedback from the intended end users of the eConsult system is invaluable. It is critical to include not only providers, but frontline operations stakeholders (e.g., schedulers and referral coordinators) in the brainstorming and decision-making process beginning in the initial planning stages. Introducing, implementing and sustaining protocols require early contributions, buy-in and vocal support from end users.

5 Phasing the Rollout Increases Adoption. It is important to explore whether it would be more beneficial to implement all specialties simultaneously, or to structure the rollout in phases. Our experience is that phasing a system rollout by implementing a few specialties in each phase provides the opportunity to identify, analyze and correct defects, as well as to optimize processes with minimal impact to patient access across all specialties.

6 Prioritizing Appointment Scheduling. In some cases, an electronic consultation drives the need to schedule a specialty appointment. Scheduling can be centralized or decentralized, and can occur in a call center structure or at the specialty clinic level. Regardless of the decision, the scheduling process and how to prioritize appointments when access is limited should be clearly defined and will optimize the experience for both patients and specialty providers.

7 Rigorous Change Management Drives Viability. Successfully implementing, operationalizing and optimizing eConsult technology involves a dedicated change management work stream rather than folding it into project management activities. Bringing all stakeholders through the stages of change, starting with awareness, shifting to understanding, moving to acceptance, then adoption and finally empowerment is essential for sustainable outcomes. Refer to our Seven Insights on Change Management¹.

About the Authors

Shellown Persaud, MHA: Shellown is a Senior Consultant in the Kenny & Company Healthcare Practice with 10 years of experience in the public, private and not-for-profit areas of the healthcare sector. She is a proactive and results-driven professional with experience in leading and working with teams, process improvement, system implementation, and managing small and large-scale projects and programs. Shellown is passionate about building and sharing knowledge, implementing change, and addressing systemic problems.

Shani Trudgian: Shani is the Healthcare Practice Partner and CXO at Kenny & Company with 25 years in management consulting and business development experience, focused exclusively in healthcare. She has guided her clients through health reform readiness strategy and implementation, process re-engineering, acquisitions, Accountable Care Organization implementation, ambulatory health care delivery refinement, business model analysis, change leadership and in other strategic areas. Shani's industry experience includes medical groups/IPAs, county/private/teaching hospitals, health plans (public/private), health systems, safety net clinics, non-profit grant-making philanthropy, and behavioral health organizations.

Sari Weis, MPA: Sari is the Manager of the Kenny & Company Healthcare Practice with 14 years of experience in the public and not-for-profit areas of the healthcare sector. Sari is an effective manager of people, time and resources and has excellent problem solving and decision-making skills. She has experience establishing and maintaining strong effective partnerships. In addition, she has a passion for facilitation, building implementing quality improvement programs, and leading multi-disciplinary teams to identify and address organizational problems' root causes.

1. <https://michaelskenny.com/points-of-view/seven-insights-what-is-change-management/>

Kenny & Company is a management consulting firm offering Strategy, Operations, and Technology services to our clients.

Who We Are

Partner Led

Our Partners are personally committed to our clients and lead every engagement.

Experience, Perspective and Passion

We average over 20 years in professional services and bring tailored approaches to every client engagement.

Focused, Collaborative, High-Impact

We work side-by-side with our clients in highly focused teams to solve complex business problems.

Client First

Our highest priority is our client's professional and personal success. We believe clients should expect more.

Guarantee Our Work

We guarantee our clients complete satisfaction every engagement every time.

Contact Information

Silicon Valley

1710 South Amphlett Blvd.
Suite 302
San Mateo, CA 94402

Portland

707 SW Washington St.
Suite 925
Portland, OR 97205

For inquiries: info@michaelskenny.com

To see additional publications and learn more about us, please visit our website at: www.michaelskenny.com.

Also, follow us on:

