

Doing more with the same: Improving specialty access and communication in the safety net

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Project Description:

I wanted to address long wait times and poor specialty-primary care provider communication to improve patient care and provider experience. I believed investing in eConsult would (1) decrease low-value specialty visits, (2) reduce wait times for patients, and (3) improve care coordination.

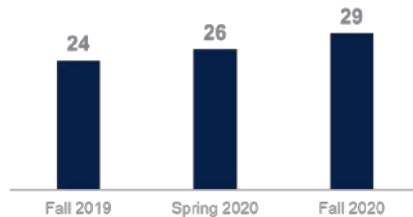
Objective:

- (1) Implement eConsult in at least 20 specialties by December 2019.
- (2) Leverage eConsult mechanism for at least 25% of all referrals by August 2020.
- (3) Reduce backlog to specialty care by 50% by August 2020.

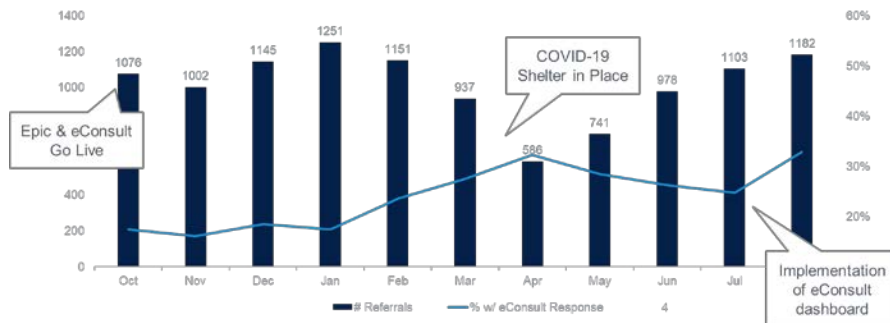
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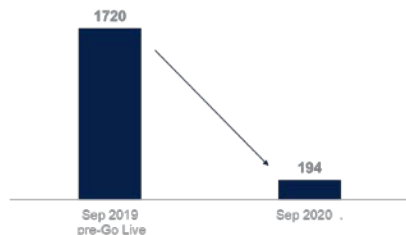
Results **Total number of specialties on eConsult**



33% of Referrals Addressed Using eConsult Response



85% Reduction in Specialty Backlog # of Patients Waiting for a Specialty Appointment



Next Steps

- Develop ongoing evaluation mechanism, incorporating provider and patient experience
- Build mechanism for reimbursing eConsult and incorporate into provider compensation incentives
- Implement additional specialties on eConsult including orthopedic surgery, spine, and dermatology
- Launch eConsult for external safety net clinics referring to Alameda Health System specialties
- Transition ownership of eConsult program, build business case for dedicated resource(s) to sustain and optimize eConsult program

Lessons Learned

- Manage scope-creep – it is worth the upfront effort
- Articulate the clinical value to all stakeholders – even nonclinical stakeholders
- Readily available, valid data is a powerful tool to change behavior but does not replace the need for a clinical champion
- Align desired behavioral changes with incentives – feedback, acknowledgement, and compensation