

Reflecting on the First Year of a New Psychiatric Econsult Service

Katherine B. Martin MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, katherine_b.martin@lvhn.org

Edward R. Norris MD, FAPA, FAPM
Lehigh Valley Health Network, edward.norris@lvhn.org

Rory L. Marraccini MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, rory_l.marraccini@lvhn.org

Shanthi P. Lewis MD
Lehigh Valley Health Network, shanthi_p.lewis@lvhn.org

Cecilia E. Zemanek BS
Lehigh Valley Health Network, cecilia.zemanek@lvhn.org

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Reflecting on the First Year of a New Psychiatric Econsult Service

Katherine Martin, MD, Edward R. Norris, MD, Rory Marraccini, MD, Shanthy P. Lewis, MD, Cecilia Zemanek, 4th year USF Medical Student
Lehigh Valley Health Network, Allentown, Pa.

Background

Econsults offer a rapid, direct, and documented communication between a primary care physician and a specialist.¹ They have the potential to enable cost-effective and convenient care for patients while improving access to and the coordination of specialty care. Unlike “curbside consults” or email consultations, Econsults are formal communications that are documented in the electronic medical record (EMR) and imply specialty review of the data. They offer the additional advantage of not requiring synchronous communication. Psychiatric practices have studied the launch of their econsult programs in the past.^{2,3} The most important variables for success of their programs were having an integrated EMR, adequate organizational support, and incentives for the providers performing consults.⁴

Methods

A new psychiatric econsult service was launched at a large health network in January 2019. Authors reviewed the success of the service by assessing the number of consults received, referral sources, and demographics of the patients who were referred in the first year of the service.

REFERENCES

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Results/Discussion/Conclusions

Econsults received between January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019 were reviewed. Using an integrated EMR, 6 C/L psychiatrists took turns performing the consults and received ½ RVU credit for each consult completed. Consultants were given 72 business hours to complete their consults. In total, 164 consults were performed during this timeframe. 73% of patients referred were female and 27% were male. 77% of patients referred had had a history of having received psychiatric services in the network in the past. 74 physicians from 37 different family medicine and internal medicine practices across the network made referrals in the first year of program. A low of 7 consults were received in January and a high of 22 consults were received in December.

Conclusions/Implications

A psychiatric econsult service can provide an efficient and convenient manner to provide consultations. The service can work especially well across large health networks that share an EMR, but do not always have readily available access to in-person specialty visits. In general, the service was well received by primary care physicians. This positive reception was evidenced by the large number of providers and practices making referrals and the growth in the number of referrals.

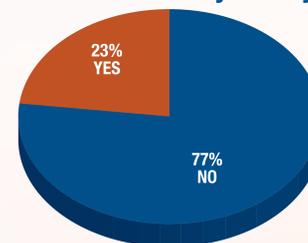
- ³ BMC Psychiatry. 2018 May 2;18(1):119. doi: 10.1186/s12888-018-1701-3.
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Number of Econsults in 2019

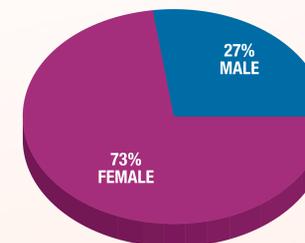


Demographics

History of Services With LVHN Psychiatry



Gender of Econsultant Patient



Sample of Econsult

Order Questions

Question
For psych e-consults, patient consent is required. I discussed with patient that I am going to have a psychiatrist from LVPG Psychiatry review the chart and offer recommendations for care. The patient agrees with this access to their medical record.

Depressive symptoms in the past 2 weeks?

Anxiety symptoms in the past 2 weeks

Psychosis symptoms

History of Bipolar Disorder

Substance Abuse

patient diagnosis to be addressed by e-consult?

What is the specific question you want the consulting provider to address?

Highlights

- 1) Patients must consent to have a psychiatrist perform an econsult
- 2) PCPs are asked to provide answers to several screening questions in advance

Number of Econsults Per Practice

