

3 Telephone calls from the patient, one telephone call and email from the GP surgery, two eConsult forms - just to speak with a doctor?

Peter had seen a hospital consultant for an issue with his big toe. The consultant prescribed a six-month course of tablets and advised that *if the issue had not cleared at the end of this time to see his local GP*. The consultant prescribed the first month of tablets and then his local GP practice prescribed a further five months of medication.

As his treatment had come to an end and the condition had not improved, Peter telephoned the receptionist at his GP surgery and was told *'there were no appointments to give out for the next month, but the GP's do have some appointments they may give out at their discretion'*. The receptionist directed Peter to the eConsult on the surgery's webpage and suggested he complete this.

What is eConsult?

eConsult enables NHS based GP practices to offer online consultations to their patients. This allows patients to submit their symptoms or requests to their own GP electronically and offers around the clock NHS self-help information, signposting to services, and a symptom checker. Information taken from GP website.

Contact your doctors to get advice for your problem now

I want help for my condition >

Get advice about specific conditions like **back pain**, coughs, mental health concerns and more

I want general advice >

Get advice about general symptoms like **tiredness**, bleeding, pain or weakness

I want administrative help >

Request **sick notes and GP letters** or ask about recent tests

I want help for my child >

Get help for common childhood problems like **rash**, earache, cold, flu, vomiting and diarrhoea

Peter spent time completing this form, which duplicated the same questions that are already in his medical records - *do you smoke, how much alcohol do you drink each week*.

After sending the form, Peter received a response to the eConsult within three hours, requesting photographs of his toe. Photos were duly taken **but** the eConsult form does not have a link to upload a photograph and Peter had to complete the form again!

Peter later discovered that the form only asks for a photo for certain self-care conditions and this issue is not covered.

Where are things now?

The eConsult form has been completed twice and submitted twice but Peter is still unable to add any photographs!

He has had two helpful conversations with the GP surgery, and was given an internal email address to send the photos to. After a couple of days, he received an email informing when a GP from the practice would telephone to discuss the issue.

“ It felt like having to tell the same story more than once. Anyhow, after much frustration I submitted the eConsult form and the message said ‘someone, will come back by the end of the following day.’

If GPs are moving to eConsult, why does the form not have an area for photographs and other useful information to add?

This would save time for the GP surgery staff and patients.

