

## Supplemental materials for

Ackerman SL, Dowdell K, Clebak KT, Quinn M, Shipman S. Patients assess an eConsult model's acceptability at 5 US academic medical centers. *Ann Fam Med*. 2020;18(1):xxx-xxx.

### Supplemental Appendix: Focus Group Guide

#### ***Welcome and introductions***

1. Welcome: Explain that we will be discussing participants' experiences with primary and specialty care and with their clinicians' communication with each other. Define primary care and specialty care.
2. Introduce facilitator and note taker.
3. Go over consent form and ask everyone to sign both copies if they decide to participate. Collect one copy from each person and explain that the other copy is for them to keep.
4. Participant introduction: Have participants introduce themselves using their first name only.
5. Ground rules:
  - a. We want you to do the talking
  - b. There are no right or wrong answers
  - c. What is said in this room stays here
  - d. Just one person speaking at a time.
6. Obtain verbal consent for audio recording. Explain that we will not identify anyone by name or other identifying information in reports or publications.
7. If patients voice concerns about the care they have received at the medical center, direct them to the patient feedback forms.
8. Begin discussion through prepared questions and semi-structured format to ensure desired content is covered.

### **Section 1. Questions**

1. Do you have a regular primary care provider at AMC Name?
2. What do you think is the main purpose of primary care?
3. Has a primary care provider ever referred you to see a specialist at AMC Name? If so, tell us about the experience.
4. If your PCP has a question about a test result or medication, how do you think they handle it?

Probe: How often do you think your primary care provider and specialists communicate with each other about your care?

### **Section 2 Vignette**

Script: Now we're going to shift our conversation a bit to talk about access to specialty care. AMC Name is trying to find ways to improve patients' access to specialty care. I'm going to tell you a brief story about a patient and then ask you for your thoughts about it.

Michael is visiting his primary care physician, Dr. Chen, for a routine check-up. Dr. Chen had previously ordered some blood tests for Michael, and one of the tests shows an unusual level of blood protein. During Michael's appointment, Dr. Chen contacts a hematologist (a blood specialist) through the electronic medical record to ask about the test result and whether any additional tests or an office visit with a specialist is needed. The hematologist can view all of Michael's medical information and will respond to Dr. Chen's question within three days. Dr. Chen tells Michael that she will let him know when she hears back from the specialist. Two days later, Michael receives a secure email message from Dr. Chen with a summary of the hematologist's advice, which is that there is probably nothing to worry about but Dr. Chen should repeat the test in three months and send Michael to the specialty clinic if the result has not returned to normal. The electronic consultation service that Dr. Chen used to contact her hematologist colleague is called an eConsult.

### **Section 3. Questions**

Begin with an explanation of the eConsult program at host AMC, including the reasons for use and types of issues that would/would not prompt PCP to opt for eConsult.

1. What would you think if your primary care provider said that s/he would like to contact a specialist to ask for advice about your care using the eConsult service?
2. What do you think are some of the possible benefits of eConsult? Drawbacks?

3. Would you like your PCP to ask for your permission to use eConsult on your behalf or would you be comfortable with your PCP making the decision?

Probe for acceptability of eConsult being initiated outside of clinic appointment and without the knowledge of the patient .

4. How would you like your PCP to communicate the specialist's advice to you?

5. If your PCP asked you to choose between the PCP asking for advice from a specialist or you seeing the specialist in person, how would you respond?

Probe: How would wait time for either option influence your decision? How would a hypothetical co-pay influence your decision?

### ***Wrap-up***

1. Is there anything else you would like to say about being referred to see a specialist at AMC Name?

Thank participants and explain how information gathered at the focus group will be used.

Give each participant a \$50 gift card.