

HOW TO CUT REFERRAL RESPONSE TIMES BY 92%

Traditional referral management was delaying care.

- Caleo Health receives 5,000 referrals annually
- 10 to 16 weeks to assess and respond with acceptance or request more detail
- Frustrated staff, patients and clinicians
- Patients resort to insecure communication



Advanced digital referral process creates efficiency to accelerate referral management.

Caleo enlisted the help of Calgary-based secure communications provider, Brightsquid, to build a secure, compliant referral and patient intake process. Now the clinic receives eConsultations through a secure email system as part of the referral process and communicates with patients securely through a compliant online registration process.

Brightsquid Secure Health Exchange closely mimics an email interface to facilitate the compliant communication of patient information in a timely manner.

STEP 1:

Include eConsult as part of referral process

- Eliminate fax
- Referral accepted or rejected via secure messaging
- Threaded conversations for unified communication regarding completeness/incompleteness of request
- Patient included for visibility
- Receipt acknowledged with one simple reply
- Request status tracked through dashboard
- Patient and referring physician (cc'd) included in appointment scheduling notifications

STEP 2:

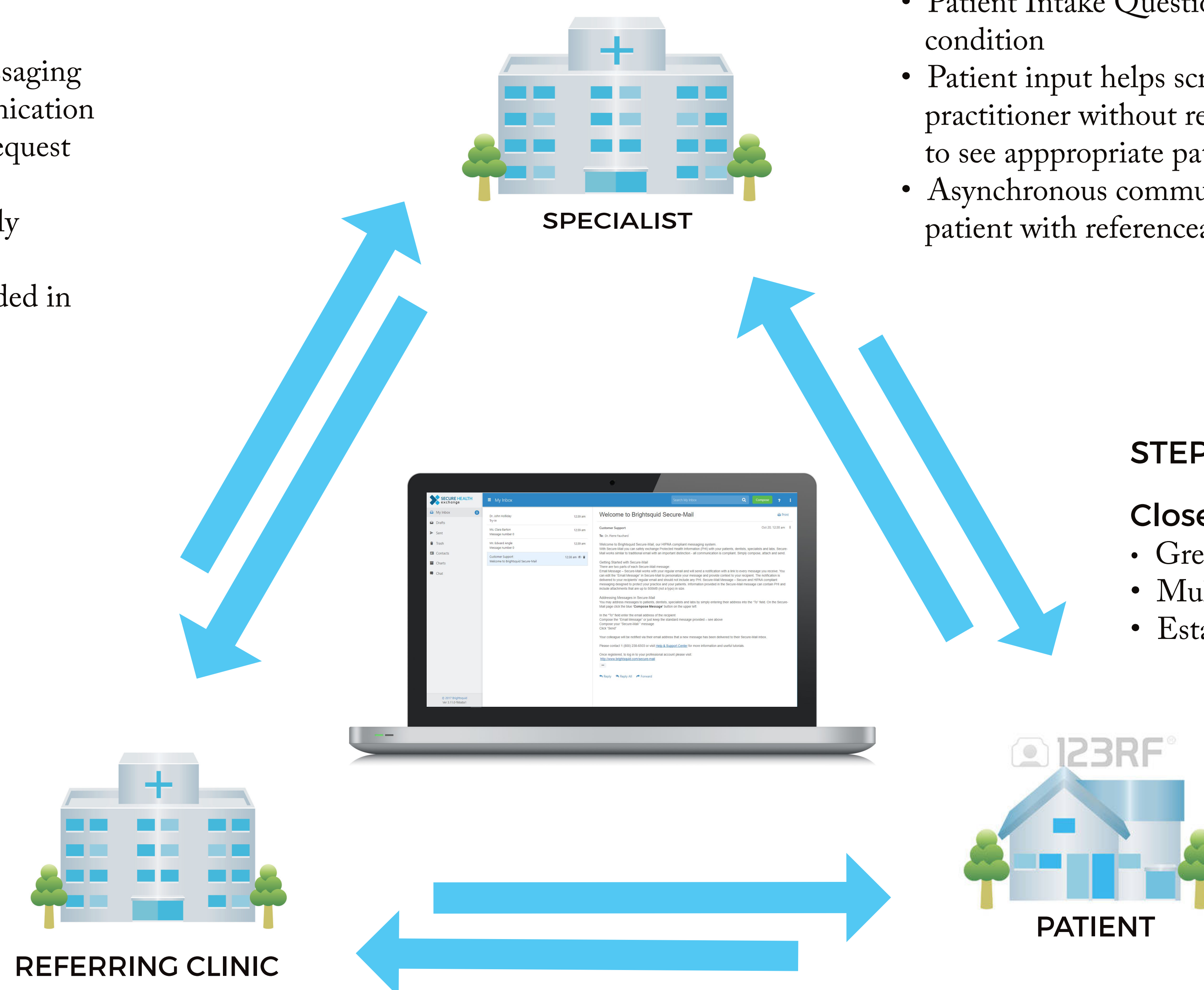
Engage patient to complete information package

- Patient Intake Questionnaire improves specialist ability to assess patient condition
- Patient input helps screen urgency and defer 20% of cases to better fit practitioner without requiring appointment, creating schedule room to see appropriate patients sooner.
- Asynchronous communication eliminates phone chase and provides patient with referenceable record of all information

STEP 3

Closed loop reporting for all involved

- Greater responsiveness through ease of use and accessibility
- Multi-recipient messaging informs all parties at once
- Established record of communications and reporting



INTRODUCING eCONSULTATIONS:

An eConsult is a consultation completed via electronic means. The intent is that the consultant would review the patient's referral letter and work up and make recommendations about treatment to the referring physician without actually having seen the patient. You may use 03.010 only when you have completed the consultation using a secure electronic method such as secure electronic messaging, secure email or other secure electronic products that are accepted by the OIPC.

<https://www.alberta.ca/03-010-secure-electronic-consultation.aspx>

EXCEEDING CPSA GUIDELINES:

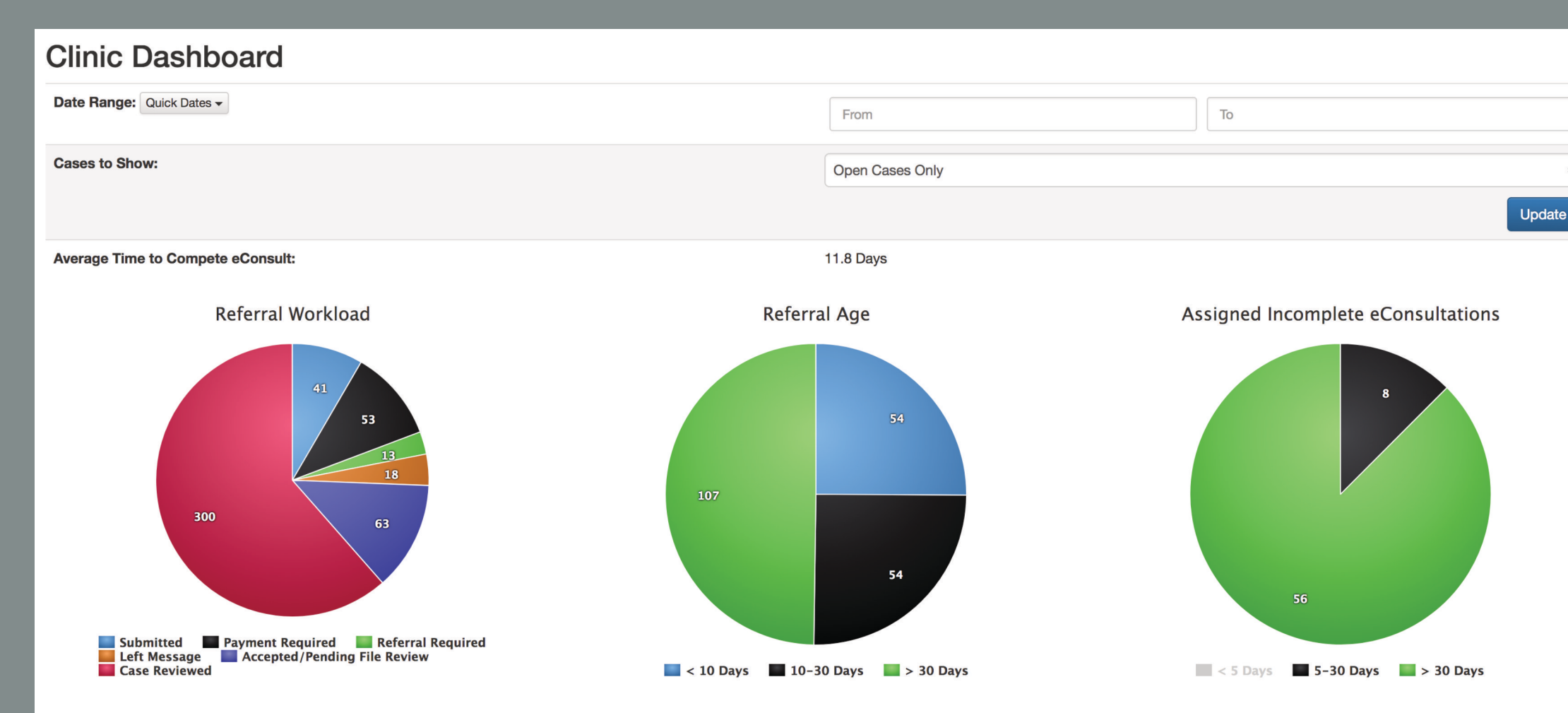
The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta has established guidelines for response times in the referral process. By connecting all parties involved, all aspects of communications are accelerated.

- A regulated member who provides consultations must acknowledge receipt of request to the referring healthcare provider within seven (7) days
- The decision to accept or deny a request must be communicated to the referring healthcare provider no longer than fourteen (14) days after the request was received
- Consultants must be reasonably available to respond to requests for consultation
- A regulated member who accepts a request for consultation must contact the patient within a time commensurate with the urgency of the request, but not longer than fourteen (14) days after the request was received.

<http://www.cpsa.ca/standards/consultation-referral-consultation/>

INSTRUMENTATION OF REFERRAL MANAGEMENT:

The dashboard created allowed staff to quickly visualize priorities in addressing referral requests. Referral Workload focusses staff activity by showing the numbers of referrals in each stage. Referral Age drives staff toward a targeted average. Assigned Incomplete eConsultations provides a list of referrals that must be dealt with first, initiating a follow up with the consultant.



OUTCOMES:

- By collecting more complete information through the patient registration process Caleo now responds to referrals in 3 to 5 days instead of 10 to 16 weeks (94% reduction)
- The new referral and registration process reduced the time it takes to deliver an opinion from 18 to 24 months down to 6 to 8 weeks (92% reduction)
- 20% of referrals are notified that the issue may not be spine related and that a referral to a different specialist may be more beneficial

