



GP CASE STUDY: RESPIRATORY ADVICE & GUIDANCE IN KENT & MEDWAY ICB

In August 2019, Enhanced Advice & Guidance (A&G) provided by Consultant Connect was launched in Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB). The service provides clinicians in Medway and Swale with access to rapid specialist advice via phone and photo messaging.

Kent and Medway stats*:

17 Telephone A&G specialties available | **14** Messaging A&G specialties available |

80% first-time call connection rate

We spoke with a GP in Chatham to find out how this service supports them and their patients.

What are the benefits of Enhanced A&G compared to more traditional methods?

'Before Consultant Connect, the only way I would be able to obtain advice was by emailing consultants and following that up with a call to their secretary. I didn't always know if I was going to get a reply or how long it would take to receive it.

'Consultant Connect makes it so much easier and quicker to have that conversation. I primarily use Telephone A&G, which I prefer as I find talking with a specialist so beneficial and detailed. **This service is invaluable; I can tell the specialist exactly what the patient is experiencing, and we can have that back-and-forth interaction to devise a patient management plan.'**

Patient Example

'I recently saw a patient who had been under the care of specialists for many months with chest infections and breathing problems, and she had tried various medications and antibiotics. When I saw this patient, she had already been referred to the Respiratory Team at Medway NHS Foundation Trust, but she was experiencing the same symptoms so booked a GP appointment.

'The patient was off sick from work, fed up that she couldn't sleep or walk due to breathing issues, and frustrated that the medical interventions were not having any effect on her condition. She was advised that there was currently an eight-month wait to be seen by the Respiratory Team but wanted to know if there was anything else that could be done in the meantime.

'I used Consultant Connect to call a local respiratory consultant who was extremely helpful. He looked at her previous history and scans, and suggested a steroid and different inhaler that could be prescribed in the interim. He also advised that he would ask the secretary to expedite the patient's appointment as she was most likely suffering from long Covid.

'After prescribing the steroid and inhaler, I followed up with the patient two weeks later. She was like a completely different person. Her life had changed dramatically; she was going for walks, sleeping better, and considering going back to work. Although her appointment with the Respiratory Team had been expedited, she wasn't as concerned as before because she felt such a difference. She was so thankful for the specialist advice, and I found it a truly rewarding experience.

'If I had seen this patient before having access to Enhanced A&G, she would've needed to wait for the referral appointment with no interim treatments.

I think it's a privilege to be able to speak to specialist colleagues in this way, and I know I can always get timely advice through Consultant Connect. This service supports a more patient-centred approach, and by speaking with specialists, it feels as though we are caring for the patient together.'

What advice would you give to colleagues who are hesitant to use Enhanced A&G?

'I can't see why clinicians wouldn't take advantage of this service. On another occasion, I contacted a specialist regarding a patient with hyperthyroidism, and the specialist suggested a medication I had not considered. It's like having a medical textbook at your fingertips!'

*Data correct as of July 2023

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