

**CONSULTATION BY E-MAIL**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

Last ten years there is a rapid development in field of information technology and diagnostical equipment. In general medicine there is available digital ECG, tympanometry, blood pressure monitoring, several laboratory tests, sometimes X ray and ultrasonography. Using digital camera and scanner, there is available to transform to digital form visible findings, X ray, documents etc. Consultation by email is based gathering anamnestic, clinical and laboratory data from digital record and add it as an attachment in common visible form. Next step is to send so composed e-mail to consultant and to wait for an answer.

**SCOPE OF STUDY**

Part of e-mail consultation of ordinary consultations by specialities. Effectiveness of e-mail consultation based comparison time and price of ordinary consultation. Estimation of compatibility in cases when specialist and patient will meet. Estimation general satisfaction of patient, specialist and family physician.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

Material of study is gathered since 15.08.2003 to 15.08.2005 from digital record, database of covering letters and e-mail archive of rural healthcare centre of Tõstamaa, Estonia. There is done statistical analysis and comparison of data for getting answer for previous questions.

**RESULTS**

During previous period is done following primary consultations by specialities. Otorinolaryngologist total 99, 43 ( 43%) by e-mail. Traumatologist total 25; 12 ( 48%) by e-mail. Orthopedists 59 total; 19 ( 32%) by e-mail. Reumatologist total 11; 3 ( 27%) by e-mail. The time for getting an answer by e-mail on an average was 1,43 day, by ordinary consultation in 17,8 day. Patient`s expenses for ordinary consultation ( visit price, transportation) is on an average 9 euros, e-mail consultation is free of charge. Basic investigation and gathering data for e-mail consultation is usually done during first reception, for ordinary consultation there is need for average 2,4 visits to specialist. Sugestion by spcialists on e-mail based consultation: urgent operation 8%; planned operation 51%; proceed started treatment 36%; need for ordinary consultation 5%. Family physician`s decision after e-mail consultation: urgent referral 8%; planned referral for operation 57%; started conservative treatment with good effect 32%; ordinary consultation due to unsatisfactory results 3%. The average compatibility diagnosis in cases when specialist and patient meet later is high. The general estimation of e-mail consultation by patient, specialist and family physician is high.

**CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

It is possible to give consultant enough information by e mail for making proper decision. Effectiveness of this activity is high, family physician feel a great support getting opinion by specialist in a rapid and easy way. For effective work there should be available basic diagnostical and IT equipment ( X-ray, tympanometry, lab, digital camera, scanner etc) ready for instant use. Most important is trust and good teamwork between patient, specialist and family physician.