**Background**

The growing use of digital health tools is expected to progressively improve efficiency and health outcomes. However, literature is scarce on how these tools affect the patient experience and patient-doctor relationship. This is especially true within vulnerable population groups, including those affected by substance dependence.

The electronic Case-finding and Help Assessment Tool (eCHAT) was designed in New Zealand as a digital health tool for general practice. eCHAT is a patient waiting room screening survey for problematic health behaviours and mood states, completed on a tablet computer. The results are transmitted to the doctor at the point of care.

**Aim**

To understand how eCHAT influences the patient-doctor relationship in patients with substance dependence.

**Method**

Interviews will be undertaken with patients, reception staff and doctors at a general practice for people with substance dependence to explore their experience of eCHAT. The Working Alliance Inventory for General Practice, a quantitative measure of the therapeutic alliance, will supplement patient data. The data and transcriptions will be processed by thematic analysis and a coding scheme.

**Results**

This research is part of the 2018 RACGP Academic Post, with results available mid-2018. The results will explore the patient experience of eCHAT, effects seen by reception staff, and how doctors used eCHAT in consultations.

**Conclusion**

Digital health tools are increasingly being incorporated into healthcare and general practice. This independent research is a unique opportunity to critically evaluate eCHAT’s effect on the patient-doctor relationship in a vulnerable population. The findings of this study may influence how similar tools are implemented in primary care.