

13 Work-related problems managed at male encounters

It was demonstrated in Table 4.1 that encounters with male patients were significantly more likely to be claimable through workers compensation. Irrespective of whether the encounter was claimable through workers compensation or Medicare, the GPs were asked to judge, using their clinical experience, which problems were likely to be work-related. These work-related problems are examined in this chapter.

13.1 Characteristics of male patients with work-related problems managed

Table 13.1 demonstrates characteristics of male patients with work-related problems managed. These patients were less likely to hold a health care card in comparison to the overall male population in the sample, but were no more or less likely to be of non-English-speaking background. Compared with the overall male representation in the sample, males with work-related problems tended to be new to the practice. However this was not significant, possibly due to the small sample size of males with work-related problems. There were no other differences in the characteristics of these patients compared with the total male encounter sample.

Figure 13.1 provides a graphic view of the age distribution of male patients with work-related problems managed. More than 50% of these male patients were aged between 25 and 44 years. Figure 13.2 shows the age-specific distribution of encounters where work-related problems were managed. At encounters with males aged under 25 years, 2.1% had a work-related problem managed. However, one in ten encounters with male patients aged between 25 and 44 years involved a work-related problem. This rate dropped to one in twenty encounters with males aged 45–64 years and was very low at encounters with patients aged 65 years and over.

Table 13.1: Characteristics of male patients with work-related problems managed and all male patients

Patient variable	Male (n = 2,012)			Male (n = 44,308)		
	Rate per 100 encounters	95% LCL	95% UCL	Rate per 100 encounters	95% LCL	95% UCL
Health care card holders	13.6	7.9	18.8	36.2	34.5	37.8
Non-English-speaking background	8.7	0.0	22.2	8.1	4.0	12.2
New patient	12.8	3.2	22.4	8.1	7.2	9.0

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit.

Only those patient variables that accounted for > 1.5 per 100 work-related encounters in male patients are included.

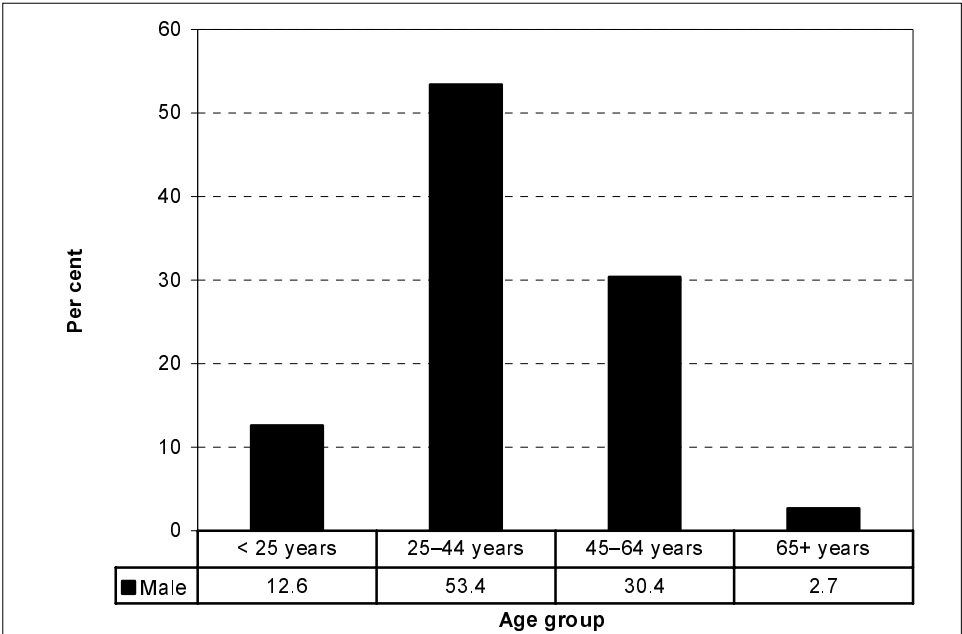


Figure 13.1: Age distribution of male patients at work-related encounters

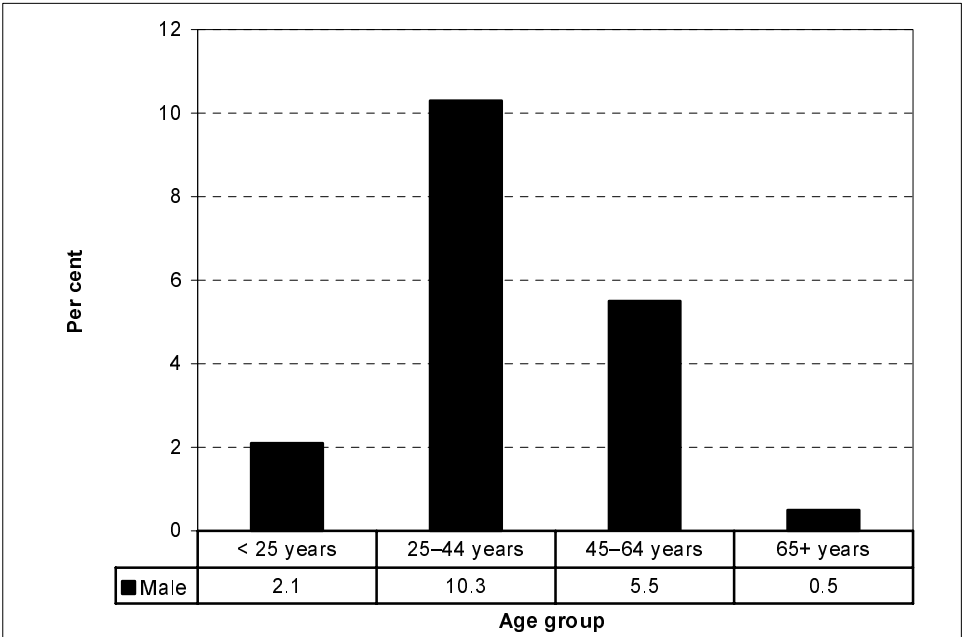


Figure 13.2: Age-specific rate of male encounters involving a work-related problem

13.2 Most common work-related problems managed for male patients

Table 13.2 shows the most commonly managed work-related problems for encounters with male patients. These were mostly related to physical injuries, especially those of a musculoskeletal nature. The most frequently managed work-related problems were back complaints (17.3% of work-related problems), sprains and strains (12.1%) and other musculoskeletal conditions (6.7%). Work-related psychological disorders of depression and anxiety in male patients were also commonly managed at these encounters.

Table 13.2: Most common work-related problems managed for male patients

Problem managed ^(a)	Male (n = 2,012)	
	Number	Per cent of total work-related problems
Back complaint*	366	17.3
Sprain/Strain*	257	12.1
Other musculoskeletal injury	142	6.7
Laceration/cut	109	5.2
Fracture*	82	3.9
General check-up	73	3.4
Other skin injury	68	3.2
Depression*	66	3.1
Neck syndrome (excluding osteoarthritis)	49	2.3
Bursitis/tendonitis/synovitis	49	2.3
Shoulder syndrome (excluding osteoarthritis)	47	2.2
Acute internal knee damage	45	2.1
Tennis elbow	31	1.5
Foreign body in eye	31	1.5
Acute stress reaction	30	1.4
Anxiety*	27	1.3
Osteoarthritis*	26	1.2
Bruise/contusion	22	1.1
<i>Subtotal (n,%)</i>	<i>1,518</i>	<i>75.4</i>
Total (n,%)	2,012	100.0

(a) Only those work-related problems that accounted for > 1% of total work-related problems managed for male patients are included.

* Includes multiple ICPC-2 and ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 3).