

6 The patients

This chapter includes data about the patients who participated in the BEACH study, including the patient characteristics and reasons for the encounter (RFEs), from each of the 10 years of the BEACH study from 1999–00 to 2008–09. The direction and type of change from 1999–00 to 2008–09 is indicated for each result in the far right column of the tables: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant linear change, ↑/↓ indicates a marginally significant linear change, § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and – indicates that there was no change.

Significant linear changes can be extrapolated to estimate the national increase or decrease in patient characteristics or RFEs between 1999–00 and 2008–09. An example of an extrapolation is given for each table. The method used to extrapolate to national change estimates is described in Chapter 2, Section 2.8.

6.1 Age–sex distribution of patients at encounter

Table 6.1 shows the age–sex distribution of patients at BEACH encounters between 1999–00 and 2008–09. Over this time period the proportion of encounters with patients aged less than 45 years decreased from 51.4% to 41.3%, which equates to approximately 5.8 million fewer encounters nationally. Over the same period, the proportion of encounters with patients aged 45 years and over increased from 48.6% to 58.7%, which equates to an additional 16.6 million encounters. The relationship between patient age, general practice attendance rates and the age distribution of the Australian population is reported in Chapter 4 of *General practice in Australia, health priorities and policies 1998 to 2008*.⁵²

6.2 Other patient characteristics

Table 6.1 shows that the proportion of encounters with patients holding a Commonwealth concession card has increased significantly from 38.6% in 1999–00 to 45.7% in 2008–09. The increase equates to about 12.1 million more encounters with Commonwealth concession cardholders in 2008–09 compared with 10 years earlier.

6.3 Patient reasons for encounter

RFEs are those concerns and expectations that patients bring to the GP. International interest in reasons for encounter has been developing over the past three decades. RFEs reflect the patient's demand for care and can provide an indication of service use patterns, which may benefit from intervention on a population level.⁵³

Participating GPs were asked to record at least one and up to three patient RFEs in words as close as possible to those used by the patient, before the diagnostic or management process had begun. RFEs can be expressed in terms of one or more symptoms (for example 'itchy eyes', 'chest pain'), in diagnostic terms (for example 'about my diabetes', 'for my hypertension'), a request for a service ('I need more scripts', 'I want a referral'), an expressed fear of disease, or a need for a check-up.

Patient RFEs can have a one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many relationship to problems managed. That is, the patient may describe a single RFE that relates to a single problem managed at the encounter, one RFE that relates to multiple problems, multiple symptoms that relate to a single problem managed at the encounter, or multiple RFEs that relate to multiple problems managed at the encounter.

Number of reasons for encounter

Table 6.2 shows there was a decrease in the proportion of patients giving a single RFE, from 62.0% in 1999–00 to 56.6% in 2008–09. To balance this there was an increase in the proportion of encounters at which two RFEs or three RFEs were recorded, from 27.5% in 1999–00 to 30.3% in 2008–09 for two RFEs, and from 10.5% in 1999–00 to 13.1% in 2008–09 for three RFEs. This suggests that there were 6.1 million more encounters nationally where two RFEs were reported and 4 million more where three RFEs were reported in 2008–09 than in 1999–00.

Reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter

Table 6.3 shows that between 1999–00 and 2008–09, there was:

- a significant increase in the overall rate of RFEs, from 148.5 per 100 encounters in 1999–00 to 156.5 per 100 encounters in 2008–09. This increase equates to about 25 million extra RFEs nationally in 2008–09 than in 1999–00
- a 40% increase in the rate of general and unspecified RFEs, equating to an approximate increase of 16.2 million general and unspecified RFEs from 1999–00 to 2008–09 nationally
- a significant decrease in RFEs relating to respiratory problems from 25.3 per 100 encounters in 1999–00 to 22.0 per 100 encounters in 2008–09
- a significant increase across the decade in RFEs relating to male genital systems and endocrine & metabolic systems
- a significant decrease across the decade in RFEs relating to neurological problems, ear problems and pregnancy & family planning.

Distribution of reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 component

Table 6.4 shows that between 1999–00 and 2008–09:

- RFEs expressed in terms of a symptom or complaint (for example, 'tired', 'feeling anxious') were the most frequent. However, the presentation rate of symptoms or complaints decreased significantly since 1999–00 from 73.4 per 100 encounters to 68.8 per 100 encounters in 2008–09
- the rate of patient attendance to request test results nearly doubled, equating to an increase of over 4.7 million encounters with an RFE of this type in 2008–09 compared with 1999–00
- requests for an administrative procedure (such as a medical certificate) also nearly doubled, equating to an increase of approximately 1.4 million requests for an administrative procedure nationally

- patient requests for medications, treatments and therapeutics (such as repeat prescriptions) increased by 27.5%, equating to an increase of approximately 5.0 million such requests in 2008–09 compared with 1999–00
- patient requests for diagnostic and preventative treatments (such as immunisation) also increased from 22.9 per 100 encounters in 1999–00 to 26.9 per 100 encounters in 2008–09.

Most frequent patient reasons for encounter

Table 6.5 shows that between 1999–00 and 2008–09:

- the rate at which patients cited a need for prescription(s) as an RFE increased by nearly one-third, equating to an increase of about 4.4 million encounters with this RFE in 2008–09 compared with 1999–00
- the rate of immunisations/vaccinations, depression and hypertension as RFEs all increased by about one-quarter
- the rate of requests for general blood tests and RFEs relating to diabetes both increased by 50%, equating to an additional 540,000 for both these RFEs
- the rate of request for referrals trebled over the decade, equating to an additional 800,000 of such requests in 2008–09 compared with 1999–00
- the presentation rate of ear pain, throat complaint, headache each decreased by about one-quarter.

Table 6.1: Characteristics of patients at encounters, BEACH, 1999-00 to 2008-09

Patient characteristics	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)											↕ ^(e) ↕
	1999-00 (n = 104,856)	2000-01 (n = 99,307)	2001-02 (n = 96,973)	2002-03 (n = 100,987)	2003-04 (n = 98,877)	2004-05 (n = 94,386)	2005-06 (n = 101,993)	2006-07 (n = 91,805)	2007-08 (n = 95,898)	2008-09 (n = 96,688)		
Sex (missing n) ^(b)	(1,182)	(1,111)	(809)	(911)	(932)	(809)	(788)	(765)	(876)	(867)		
Male	42.7 (42.0-43.5)	42.9 (42.2-43.6)	42.6 (41.9-43.3)	42.2 (41.4-42.9)	42.6 (41.8-43.3)	43.5 (42.7-44.3)	44.0 (43.2-44.7)	43.7 (42.9-44.5)	42.9 (42.1-43.7)	42.4 (41.5-43.3)	—	
Female	57.3 (56.5-58.0)	57.1 (56.4-57.8)	57.4 (56.7-58.1)	57.8 (57.0-58.6)	57.4 (56.7-58.2)	56.5 (55.7-57.3)	56.0 (55.3-56.8)	56.3 (55.5-57.1)	57.1 (56.3-57.9)	57.6 (56.7-58.5)	—	
Age group (missing n) ^(b)	(804)	(846)	(760)	(895)	(905)	(925)	(769)	(779)	(784)	(704)		
< 1 year	2.4 (2.2-2.5)	2.1 (1.9-2.3)	2.0 (1.9-2.1)	1.9 (1.8-2.1)	1.8 (1.7-1.9)	1.9 (1.8-2.1)	2.1 (1.9-2.2)	1.8 (1.7-2.0)	2.0 (1.8-2.1)	2.0 (1.8-2.1)	↕	
1-4 years	5.2 (4.9-5.5)	5.4 (5.1-5.7)	4.9 (4.6-5.2)	5.0 (4.7-5.3)	4.6 (4.3-4.8)	4.3 (4.0-4.7)	4.3 (4.0-4.5)	4.1 (3.9-4.4)	4.3 (4.1-4.6)	4.2 (4.0-4.4)	↕	
5-14 years	7.2 (6.9-7.5)	6.8 (6.4-7.2)	6.4 (6.1-6.7)	6.6 (6.3-6.9)	5.9 (5.6-6.3)	5.8 (5.5-6.1)	6.0 (5.7-6.3)	5.6 (5.3-5.9)	5.5 (5.2-5.8)	5.3 (5.1-5.6)	↕	
15-24 years	10.4 (9.9-10.8)	10.3 (9.8-10.7)	9.5 (9.1-10.0)	10.1 (9.7-10.4)	9.6 (9.2-10.1)	9.0 (8.6-9.4)	9.4 (9.0-9.8)	9.1 (8.6-9.5)	9.5 (9.0-9.9)	8.4 (8.0-8.9)	↕	
25-44 years	26.3 (25.5-27.0)	26.3 (25.6-27.0)	25.8 (25.1-26.5)	25.7 (24.9-26.4)	24.1 (23.4-24.8)	24.4 (23.7-25.1)	23.9 (23.2-24.7)	23.3 (22.6-24.0)	23.4 (22.7-24.1)	21.4 (20.7-22.1)	↕	
45-64 years	24.5 (24.0-25.0)	26.1 (25.5-26.7)	26.3 (25.7-26.8)	26.5 (25.9-27.0)	27.2 (26.7-27.7)	28.0 (27.4-28.6)	27.6 (27.0-28.2)	28.2 (27.6-28.7)	28.1 (27.5-28.6)	29.1 (28.5-29.6)	↕	
65-74 years	12.0 (11.5-12.5)	11.7 (11.2-12.2)	12.3 (11.8-12.8)	11.6 (11.1-12.0)	12.4 (11.9-12.9)	12.6 (12.1-13.2)	12.2 (11.7-12.6)	12.7 (12.2-13.2)	12.6 (12.1-13.1)	13.4 (12.9-13.9)	↕	
75+ years	12.1 (11.4-12.9)	11.3 (10.7-12.0)	12.8 (12.0-13.5)	12.7 (11.9-13.4)	14.4 (13.6-15.2)	13.9 (13.1-14.7)	14.6 (13.7-15.4)	15.2 (14.4-16.0)	14.7 (13.9-15.5)	16.2 (15.4-17.0)	↕	

(continued)

Table 6.1 (continued): Characteristics of patients at encounters, BEACH, 1999-00 to 2008-09

Patient characteristics	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)										^(e) ↕
	1999-00 (n = 104,856)	2000-01 (n = 99,307)	2001-02 (n = 96,973)	2002-03 (n = 100,987)	2003-04 (n = 98,877)	2004-05 (n = 94,386)	2005-06 (n = 101,993)	2006-07 (n = 91,805)	2007-08 (n = 95,898)	2008-09 (n = 96,688)	
Other characteristics ^(c)											
New patient to practice	7.3 (6.7-7.9)	8.0 (7.2-8.7)	8.9 (8.2-9.5)	9.7 (8.9-10.5)	9.1 (8.4-9.8)	8.9 (8.1-9.6)	8.9 (8.2-9.7)	8.4 (7.7-9.2)	8.1 (7.1-9.1)	5.1 (5.1-6.0)	↕
Commonwealth concession card	38.6 (37.0-40.2)	36.7 (35.1-38.3)	41.9 (40.4-43.3)	40.4 (38.8-41.9)	42.5 (41.0-44.0)	43.2 (41.8-44.7)	42.1 (40.6-43.7)	41.5 (39.9-43.0)	41.8 (40.3-43.3)	4GH (4F, €-4H)	↕
Repatriation health card ^(d)	2.9 (2.6-3.1)	3.1 (2.9-3.4)	3.3 (3.0-3.5)	3.3 (3.0-3.6)	3.5 (3.2-3.8)	3.2 (2.9-3.4)	3.1 (2.8-3.3)	3.1 (2.8-3.3)	2.8 (2.5-3.0)	2.1 (2.1-3.1)	—
Non-English-speaking background	8.0 (6.5-9.5)	8.0 (7.2-8.7)	9.3 (7.6-11.0)	10.6 (9.0-12.2)	9.7 (7.8-11.6)	10.8 (9.0-12.6)	9.8 (8.2-11.4)	7.1 (5.8-8.5)	9.9 (8.2-11.5)	9.4 (7.9-10.9)	—
Aboriginal person and/or Torres Strait Islander	0.7 (0.5-0.9)	0.8 (0.5-1.1)	1.0 (0.8-1.3)	1.0 (0.8-1.3)	1.6 (1.2-2.0)	1.3 (1.0-1.7)	0.9 (0.6-1.1)	0.9 (0.6-1.2)	0.9 (0.7-1.2)	0.8 (0.5-1.0)	—

(a) The direction and type of change from 1999-00 to 2008-09 is indicated for each result: ↕ indicates a statistically significant change, \$ indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and — indicates there was no change.

(b) Missing data removed.

(c) Missing data for each of the listed 'other' patient characteristics were counted as a 'no' response.

(d) The 1999-00 results published here include patients who held either a gold or white Repatriation health card; some previously published figures only included patients who held the gold card.

Note: CI—confidence interval.

Table 6.2: Number of patient reasons for encounter, BEACH, 1999–00 to 2008–09

Number of reasons for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)										2008–09 (n = 96,688)	↑ ^(a) ↓
	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	2008–09 (n = 96,688)		
One RFE	62.0 (60.8–63.1)	60.4 (59.2–61.6)	61.8 (60.6–63.0)	60.7 (59.5–61.9)	61.0 (59.9–62.2)	61.4 (60.2–62.6)	60.9 (59.7–62.2)	60.6 (59.4–61.9)	58.9 (57.7–60.2)	56.6 (55.5–57.8)		↔
Two RFEs	27.5 (26.9–28.2)	28.2 (27.6–28.9)	27.2 (26.5–28.0)	27.8 (27.1–28.4)	27.7 (27.0–28.4)	27.6 (26.9–28.3)	27.8 (27.1–28.5)	27.9 (27.2–28.7)	29.1 (28.5–29.8)	30.3 (29.6–30.9)		↑
Three RFEs	10.5 (9.8–11.1)	11.4 (10.7–12.1)	11.0 (10.3–11.6)	11.6 (10.8–12.3)	11.3 (10.5–12.0)	11.0 (10.3–11.7)	11.2 (10.5–11.9)	11.4 (10.7–12.2)	11.9 (11.2–12.6)	13.1 (12.4–13.8)		↑

(a) The direction and type of change from 1999–00 to 2008–09 is indicated for each result. ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change.

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFE—reason for encounter.

Table 6.3: Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICP-2 chapter, BEACH, 1999–00 to 2008–09

ICPC-2 Chapter	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (95% CI)										2008–09 (n = 96,688)	↑ ^(b) ↔ ↓
	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	2008–09 (n = 96,688)		
General & unspecified	29.0 (28.1–29.9)	28.3 (27.5–29.1)	30.9 (29.9–31.8)	34.6 (33.6–35.6)	36.2 (35.2–37.2)	36.5 (35.5–37.6)	36.3 (35.2–37.4)	37.7 (36.7–38.8)	40.1 (39.0–41.2)	40.6 (39.6–41.7)		↑
Respiratory	25.3 (24.3–26.2)	24.6 (23.7–25.4)	23.4 (22.6–24.2)	23.0 (22.0–24.0)	21.4 (20.6–22.2)	20.6 (19.8–21.4)	21.9 (21.1–22.7)	20.7 (19.9–21.6)	20.6 (19.7–21.5)	22.0 (21.2–22.9)		↓
Musculoskeletal	16.6 (16.1–17.1)	17.7 (17.1–18.2)	16.7 (16.1–17.3)	17.7 (17.2–18.3)	16.3 (15.7–16.9)	16.7 (16.0–17.3)	16.4 (15.8–16.9)	16.1 (15.6–16.6)	15.4 (14.9–15.9)	16.1 (15.5–16.6)		—
Skin	15.1 (14.7–15.6)	15.5 (15.0–16.0)	14.4 (13.9–14.9)	14.7 (14.3–15.2)	15.1 (14.5–15.7)	15.6 (15.0–16.2)	15.0 (14.5–15.6)	15.7 (15.1–16.3)	15.4 (14.8–16.1)	15.1 (14.6–15.6)		—
Cardiovascular	11.2 (10.6–11.8)	11.7 (11.1–12.2)	11.4 (10.8–11.9)	10.6 (10.0–11.1)	10.7 (10.1–11.2)	10.5 (10.0–11.0)	10.8 (10.2–11.3)	11.2 (10.7–11.8)	11.2 (10.6–11.8)	11.5 (10.9–12.0)		—
Digestive	10.4 (10.0–10.7)	11.1 (10.7–11.5)	10.6 (10.2–11.0)	10.4 (10.0–10.8)	10.7 (10.3–11.2)	9.9 (9.5–10.3)	9.9 (9.5–10.3)	10.1 (9.7–10.5)	10.3 (10.0–10.7)	9.8 (9.4–10.1)		§

(continued)

Table 6.3 (continued): Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICP-2 chapter, BEACH, 1999-00 to 2008-09

ICPC-2 Chapter	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (95% CI)										^(b)
	1999-00 (n = 104,856)	2000-01 (n = 99,307)	2001-02 (n = 96,973)	2002-03 (n = 100,987)	2003-04 (n = 98,877)	2004-05 (n = 94,386)	2005-06 (n = 101,993)	2006-07 (n = 91,805)	2007-08 (n = 95,898)	2008-09 (n = 96,688)	
Psychological	7.2 (6.8-7.6)	8.1 (7.7-8.6)	7.8 (7.3-8.3)	7.3 (6.9-7.8)	7.3 (6.9-7.7)	7.6 (7.2-8.0)	7.8 (7.3-8.3)	7.5 (7.1-7.8)	7.8 (7.5-8.2)	8.7 (8.2-9.1)	↕
Endocrine & metabolic	5.4 (5.1-5.7)	6.2 (5.9-6.5)	6.4 (6.1-6.7)	6.0 (5.7-6.3)	6.2 (5.8-6.5)	6.2 (5.8-6.5)	6.2 (5.8-6.5)	6.4 (6.1-6.8)	6.5 (6.1-6.8)	6.9 (6.5-7.3)	↗
Female genital system	5.3 (4.9-5.7)	5.5 (5.1-5.9)	5.5 (5.1-5.9)	6.1 (5.7-6.6)	5.1 (4.8-5.5)	5.0 (4.6-5.4)	5.1 (4.8-5.5)	5.1 (4.7-5.4)	5.2 (4.8-5.6)	5.3 (4.9-5.6)	—
Neurological	5.6 (5.4-5.8)	5.8 (5.5-6.0)	5.4 (5.2-5.6)	5.7 (5.5-6.0)	5.3 (5.1-5.6)	5.1 (4.9-5.4)	4.9 (4.7-5.2)	4.9 (4.7-5.2)	4.8 (4.6-5.0)	4.8 (4.6-5.0)	↘
Ear	4.2 (4.0-4.4)	4.2 (4.0-4.3)	4.2 (4.0-4.4)	4.0 (3.8-4.1)	3.7 (3.6-3.9)	3.9 (3.7-4.1)	3.9 (3.7-4.1)	3.6 (3.4-3.7)	3.6 (3.4-3.8)	3.7 (3.5-3.9)	↘
Pregnancy & family planning	3.8 (3.5-4.2)	3.5 (3.2-3.8)	3.5 (3.2-3.8)	3.6 (3.3-3.9)	3.7 (3.4-4.0)	3.4 (3.1-3.7)	3.4 (3.1-3.6)	3.3 (3.0-3.6)	3.2 (3.0-3.5)	3.1 (2.8-3.3)	↘
Urology	2.6 (2.5-2.8)	2.4 (2.3-2.6)	2.5 (2.4-2.7)	2.5 (2.3-2.6)	2.5 (2.4-2.7)	2.5 (2.4-2.7)	2.6 (2.5-2.8)	2.6 (2.4-2.7)	2.5 (2.4-2.7)	2.7 (2.5-2.8)	—
Eye	2.8 (2.7-3.0)	2.7 (2.5-2.8)	2.5 (2.4-2.7)	2.7 (2.6-2.9)	2.7 (2.6-2.9)	2.7 (2.6-2.9)	2.8 (2.6-2.9)	2.5 (2.4-2.7)	2.5 (2.4-2.6)	2.6 (2.4-2.7)	—
Blood	2.1 (1.9-2.3)	2.0 (1.8-2.2)	1.1 (0.9-1.2)	1.0 (0.8-1.2)	1.3 (1.1-1.4)	1.2 (1.0-1.5)	1.2 (1.0-1.3)	1.2 (1.1-1.4)	1.4 (1.2-1.5)	1.4 (1.3-1.6)	§
Male genital system	1.0 (0.9-1.1)	1.1 (1.0-1.3)	1.0 (0.9-1.1)	1.0 (0.9-1.2)	1.1 (0.9-1.2)	1.2 (1.1-1.4)	1.3 (1.2-1.4)	1.2 (1.1-1.3)	1.2 (1.1-1.3)	1.3 (1.2-1.4)	↗
Social problems	1.0 (0.8-1.1)	0.9 (0.7-1.1)	1.0 (0.8-1.1)	1.0 (0.8-1.2)	0.9 (0.8-1.1)	1.0 (0.8-1.1)	0.9 (0.8-1.0)	0.9 (0.8-1.0)	1.1 (1.0-1.2)	1.0 (0.9-1.0)	—
Total RFEs	148.5 (146.7-150.2)	151.0 (149.2-152.8)	149.2 (147.4-150.9)	150.9 (149.0-152.7)	150.2 (148.4-152.0)	149.6 (147.8-151.5)	150.3 (148.4-152.2)	150.8 (148.9-152.7)	153.0 (151.1-154.8)	156.5 (154.7-158.2)	↗

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one RFE can be recorded for each encounter.

(b) The direction and type of change from 1999-00 to 2008-09 is indicated for each result: ↗↘ indicates a statistically significant change, § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and — indicates there was no change.

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFE—reason for encounter.

Table 6.4: Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICP-C-2 component, BEACH, 1999–00 to 2008–09

ICPC component	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (95% CI)											^(b)
	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	2008–09 (n = 96,688)		
Symptoms & complaints	73.4 (71.5–75.3)	76.6 (74.6–78.6)	74.1 (72.3–75.9)	74.0 (72.0–76.1)	71.7 (69.8–73.5)	71.3 (69.4–73.2)	69.7 (67.9–71.5)	67.9 (66.1–69.8)	67.7 (65.8–69.6)	68.8 (67.1–70.5)	↘	
Diagnosis, diseases	27.7 (26.2–29.2)	29.0 (27.6–30.5)	27.3 (25.9–28.7)	26.0 (24.6–27.4)	25.1 (23.9–26.4)	24.5 (23.3–25.7)	26.8 (25.4–28.2)	27.9 (26.2–29.5)	27.8 (26.3–29.3)	27.8 (26.4–29.2)	§	
Diagnostic & preventive procedures	22.9 (22.0–23.8)	22.3 (21.4–23.2)	22.7 (21.7–23.6)	23.8 (22.8–24.7)	24.0 (23.1–25.0)	23.4 (22.5–24.3)	24.4 (23.4–25.3)	24.8 (23.8–25.7)	25.6 (24.7–26.5)	26.9 (26.0–27.8)	↑	
Medications, treatments & therapeutics	12.0 (11.4–12.6)	11.2 (10.6–11.8)	11.9 (11.3–12.4)	13.0 (12.4–13.6)	14.4 (13.7–15.1)	14.5 (13.8–15.3)	14.4 (13.7–15.1)	14.2 (13.5–14.8)	15.1 (14.3–15.8)	15.3 (14.6–15.9)	↑	
Results	4.0 (3.7–4.3)	4.2 (3.9–4.6)	4.7 (4.4–5.1)	5.4 (5.0–5.7)	6.0 (5.6–6.4)	6.8 (6.4–7.2)	6.5 (6.1–6.9)	6.9 (6.5–7.3)	7.6 (7.2–8.1)	7.8 (7.4–8.2)	↑	
Referral & other RFEs	7.2 (6.7–7.7)	6.5 (6.0–7.0)	7.2 (6.7–7.7)	7.0 (6.6–7.5)	7.2 (6.8–7.6)	7.4 (6.9–7.9)	6.9 (6.5–7.4)	7.3 (6.9–7.8)	6.8 (6.4–7.2)	7.5 (7.0–7.9)	–	
Administrative	1.3 (1.1–1.4)	1.1 (0.9–1.3)	1.3 (1.1–1.5)	1.6 (1.4–1.8)	1.8 (1.6–1.9)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.9 (1.7–2.0)	2.4 (2.2–2.5)	2.4 (2.2–2.6)	↑	
Total RFEs	148.5 (146.7–150.2)	151.0 (149.2–152.8)	149.2 (147.4–150.9)	150.9 (149.0–152.7)	150.2 (148.4–152.0)	149.6 (147.8–151.5)	150.3 (148.4–152.2)	150.8 (148.9–152.7)	153.0 (151.1–154.8)	156.5 (154.7–158.2)	↑	

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one RFE can be recorded for each encounter.

(b) The direction and type of change from 1999–00 to 2008–09 is indicated for each result: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, and § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change.

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFE—reason for encounter.

Table 6.5: Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, BEACH, 1999-00 to 2008-09

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (95% CI)											^(b) ↑ ↓
	1999-00 (n = 104,856)	2000-01 (n = 99,307)	2001-02 (n = 96,973)	2002-03 (n = 100,987)	2003-04 (n = 98,877)	2004-05 (n = 94,386)	2005-06 (n = 101,993)	2006-07 (n = 91,805)	2007-08 (n = 95,898)	2008-09 (n = 96,688)		
Check-up—all*	14.2 (13.5-14.9)	13.2 (12.5-13.9)	13.4 (12.7-14.0)	13.6 (12.9-14.2)	14.1 (13.4-14.8)	13.4 (12.8-14.0)	14.1 (13.4-14.8)	14.6 (13.9-15.2)	14.5 (13.8-15.1)	15.2 (14.5-15.8)	—	
Prescription—all*	9.6 (9.1-10.2)	9.2 (8.7-9.8)	9.8 (9.2-10.3)	10.8 (10.2-11.3)	12.1 (11.5-12.7)	12.2 (11.5-12.8)	12.1 (11.4-12.7)	11.8 (11.2-12.4)	12.5 (11.9-13.2)	12.6 (12.0-13.2)	↑	
Test results*	4.0 (3.7-4.2)	4.3 (3.9-4.6)	4.7 (4.4-5.0)	5.4 (5.0-5.7)	6.0 (5.7-6.4)	6.8 (6.4-7.2)	6.5 (6.1-6.9)	6.9 (6.5-7.3)	7.6 (7.2-8.1)	7.8 (7.4-8.2)	↑	
Cough	7.0 (6.5-7.4)	7.0 (6.5-7.4)	6.5 (6.1-6.9)	6.7 (6.3-7.2)	6.2 (5.8-6.6)	5.9 (5.5-6.2)	6.4 (6.0-6.8)	5.8 (5.4-6.2)	6.2 (5.8-6.7)	6.8 (6.3-7.2)	—	
Immunisation/vaccination—all*	4.2 (3.9-4.6)	4.4 (4.0-4.8)	4.6 (4.2-5.0)	4.7 (4.3-5.1)	4.4 (4.0-4.9)	4.3 (3.9-4.8)	4.8 (4.4-5.2)	4.3 (3.9-4.7)	4.8 (4.4-5.1)	5.3 (4.8-5.7)	↑	
Throat complaint	4.2 (3.8-4.5)	4.0 (3.7-4.3)	3.8 (3.5-4.0)	3.8 (3.5-4.1)	3.4 (3.1-3.6)	3.5 (3.3-3.8)	3.3 (3.0-3.5)	3.3 (3.1-3.6)	3.3 (3.0-3.6)	3.2 (2.9-3.5)	↓	
Back complaint*	3.6 (3.4-3.8)	3.8 (3.5-4.0)	3.8 (3.6-4.1)	3.5 (3.3-3.8)	3.5 (3.2-3.7)	3.4 (3.2-3.6)	3.5 (3.2-3.7)	3.2 (3.0-3.4)	3.2 (3.0-3.4)	3.1 (2.9-3.3)	↓	
Rash*	2.7 (2.6-2.9)	2.9 (2.8-3.1)	2.8 (2.6-3.0)	2.8 (2.7-3.0)	2.8 (2.6-2.9)	2.9 (2.7-3.1)	2.6 (2.5-2.8)	2.8 (2.6-3.0)	2.5 (2.3-2.6)	2.6 (2.5-2.8)	—	
Upper respiratory infection	2.7 (2.4-3.0)	2.6 (2.3-2.9)	2.3 (2.1-2.6)	2.2 (1.9-2.4)	1.9 (1.7-2.1)	1.8 (1.5-2.0)	2.4 (2.0-2.7)	2.4 (2.1-2.7)	2.2 (2.0-2.5)	2.3 (2.0-2.6)	§	
Hypertension*	1.7 (1.4-1.9)	2.2 (1.9-2.4)	2.1 (1.8-2.3)	1.8 (1.6-2.0)	1.9 (1.6-2.1)	1.7 (1.5-1.9)	1.9 (1.6-2.1)	2.1 (1.8-2.5)	2.1 (1.8-2.3)	2.1 (1.9-2.4)	↑	
Administrative procedure NOS	1.1 (1.0-1.2)	1.0 (0.9-1.1)	1.2 (1.0-1.3)	1.4 (1.3-1.6)	1.5 (1.4-1.7)	1.4 (1.3-1.5)	1.4 (1.3-1.6)	1.6 (1.5-1.8)	2.0 (1.8-2.1)	2.1 (1.9-2.3)	↑	
Depression*	1.7 (1.6-1.8)	2.1 (2.0-2.3)	1.9 (1.8-2.0)	1.9 (1.7-2.0)	1.8 (1.7-1.9)	1.9 (1.7-2.0)	1.9 (1.7-2.0)	1.9 (1.8-2.1)	2.0 (1.9-2.2)	2.1 (1.9-2.2)	↑	
Fever	2.2 (1.9-2.5)	2.3 (2.0-2.5)	2.0 (1.8-2.2)	2.2 (1.9-2.5)	1.9 (1.7-2.1)	1.8 (1.6-2.0)	2.2 (1.9-2.5)	1.8 (1.6-2.0)	2.1 (1.8-2.5)	1.9 (1.7-2.1)	—	

(continued)

Table 6.5 (continued): Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, BEACH, 1999–00 to 2008–09

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (95% CI)											^(b) ↕
	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	2008–09 (n = 96,688)		
Abdominal pain*	2.1 (1.9–2.2)	2.3 (2.1–2.4)	2.1 (2.0–2.2)	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	2.0 (1.9–2.2)	1.9 (1.8–2.0)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.8 (1.6–1.9)	1.7 (1.6–1.9)	↕	
Headache	2.2 (2.0–2.3)	2.2 (2.0–2.3)	2.0 (1.9–2.2)	2.1 (1.9–2.3)	1.8 (1.6–1.9)	1.7 (1.6–1.8)	1.7 (1.6–1.8)	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	1.6 (1.5–1.8)	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	↕	
Skin complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.3 (1.1–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.5)	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	1.5 (1.3–1.6)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	↑	
Weakness/tiredness	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.5 (1.3–1.6)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	—	
Ear pain	1.9 (1.7–2.0)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.7 (1.6–1.9)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	1.6 (1.5–1.7)	1.6 (1.5–1.7)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.6)	↕	
Shoulder complaint	1.0 (1.0–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.3 (1.1–1.4)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	↑	
Knee complaint	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	—	
Diarrhoea	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	1.5 (1.3–1.6)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.6)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	—	
Diabetes—all*	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	1.0 (0.8–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.3 (1.1–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	↑	
Blood test NOS	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	↑	
Vertigo/dizziness	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.1–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	—	
Anxiety*	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.3)	—	
Swelling*	1.1 (1.0–1.1)	1.1 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.1)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—	

(continued)

Table 6.5 (continued): Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, BEACH, 1999–00 to 2008–09

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (95% CI)											^(b) ↕ ↗
	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	2008–09 (n = 96,688)		
Sleep disturbance	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—	
Foot/Toe complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—	
Leg/thigh complaint	1.0 (0.9–1.0)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.0 (1.0–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	1.0 (1.0–1.1)	—	
Referrals NOS	0.3 (0.3–0.4)	0.4 (0.3–0.4)	0.5 (0.4–0.5)	0.7 (0.6–0.7)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.0)	↗	
Neck complaint	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	0.9 (0.9–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–0.9)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	↘	
Chest pain NOS	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	↘	
Advice/education	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.6 (0.6–0.7)	0.6 (0.6–0.7)	0.7 (0.7–0.8)	0.8 (0.7–1.0)	0.7 (0.7–0.8)	0.8 (0.8–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	↗	
Trauma/injury NOS	0.7 (0.7–0.8)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.6 (0.6–0.7)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.9 (0.8–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.8–0.9)	—	
Vomiting	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.3)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	↘	
Total RFEs	148.5 (146.7–150.2)	151.0 (149.2–152.8)	149.2 (147.4–150.9)	150.9 (149.0–152.7)	150.2 (148.4–152.0)	149.6 (147.8–151.5)	150.3 (148.4–152.2)	150.8 (148.9–152.7)	153.0 (151.1–154.8)	156.5 (154.7–158.2)	↗	

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one RFE can be recorded for each encounter.

(b) The direction and type of change from 1999–00 to 2008–09 is indicated for each result: ↗↘ indicates a statistically significant change, ↕ indicates a marginal change, \$ indicates a non-linear significant change, and — indicates there was no change.

* Includes multiple ICD-9-CM-2 or ICD-9-CM-10 codes (see Appendix 4).

Note: CI—confidence interval; NOS—not otherwise specified; RFE—reason for encounter.