

# 18 Conclusion

This report has provided an updated description of the major aspects of general practice activity in Australia 2001–02. It has also provided a further measure of the changes that have occurred in general practice since 1998–99, the extent to which changes noted in the last report have continued to progress, or have settled during the last year.

Readers should be aware that a summary of the results of the more common events recorded in BEACH in each of the 4 years reported to date is provided as Appendix 4. This provides an easy reference point for trends in data pertaining to specific topics of interest.

## 18.1 Current status of BEACH

The BEACH program is now in its fifth year. The database for the first 4 years includes data pertaining to approximately 400,000 GP-patient encounters from about 4,000 GPs. Each year the GPSCU publishes an annual report of BEACH results through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in which the results from the previous BEACH data year are reported on a national basis for the more common events. Other reports use the database for secondary analyses of a selected topic or for a specific research question. The most recent example is a study of the patients for whom cardiovascular problems are managed in general practice, their risk behaviours, and cardiovascular disease prevalence. Current studies which will be reported in the near future include: the care of males in general practice 2000–01; the care of the elderly in general practice 2000–02; defining chronic disease in Australian general practice; changes between 1998–99 and 2000–01 in GPs' ordering of pathology, and (in association with the Family Medicine Research Centre, University of Sydney) a comparative study of the practice patterns of Fellows of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and those who are not.

## 18.2 Access to BEACH data

### Public domain

In line with standard Australian Institute of Health and Welfare practice, this annual publication provides a comprehensive view of general practice activity in Australia.

Abstracts of results for the substudies conducted in the third year of the program and not reported in this document are available through the web site of the Family Medicine Research Centre (of which the GPSCU is a part) at <http://www.fmrc.org.au>. The subjects covered in the abstracts are listed below, together with an indication of the number of GPs and the number of encounters in each subsample.

Abstract Number	Subject	Number of encounters	Number of GPs
25	Prevalence of diabetes, medications and control	2,746	93
26	Prevalence of diagnosed hypertension and difficulties in treatment	2,810	95
27	Prevalence and management of influenza	2,784	94
28	Prevalence of Alzheimers disease and dementia	2,194	88
29	Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) and acid suppressant use	2,551	88
30	Lipid-lowering medications and coronary heart disease	2,661	90
31	Prevalence and severity of chronic heart failure	2,618	89
32	Patient use of after-hours medical services	2,544	88
33	Prevalence and management of cardiovascular risk factors	3,108	105
34	Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease	3,018	102
35	Smoking status of adults and their attempts to quit	5,823	231
36	Patients use of complementary therapy	5,567	193
37	Prevalence of common morbidities in patients encountered in general practice	11,373	379

## Participating organisations

Organisations providing funding for the BEACH program receive summary reports of the encounter data quarterly and standard reports about their subjects of interest. Analysis of the data is a complex task. The General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit has therefore designed standard report formats that cover most aspects of the subject under investigation. Individual data analyses are conducted where the specific research question is not adequately answered through standard reports. The GPSCU now provides participating organisations direct web access to straightforward analyses on any selected problem or medication in real time.

## External purchasers of standard reports

Non-contributing organisations may purchase standard reports or other ad hoc analyses. Charges are available on request. The General Practice Statistics and Classification Unit should be contacted for further information. Contact details are provided at the front of this publication.