

# 6 The patients

## 6.1 Annual results, 2006–07

### Age–sex distribution of patients at encounter

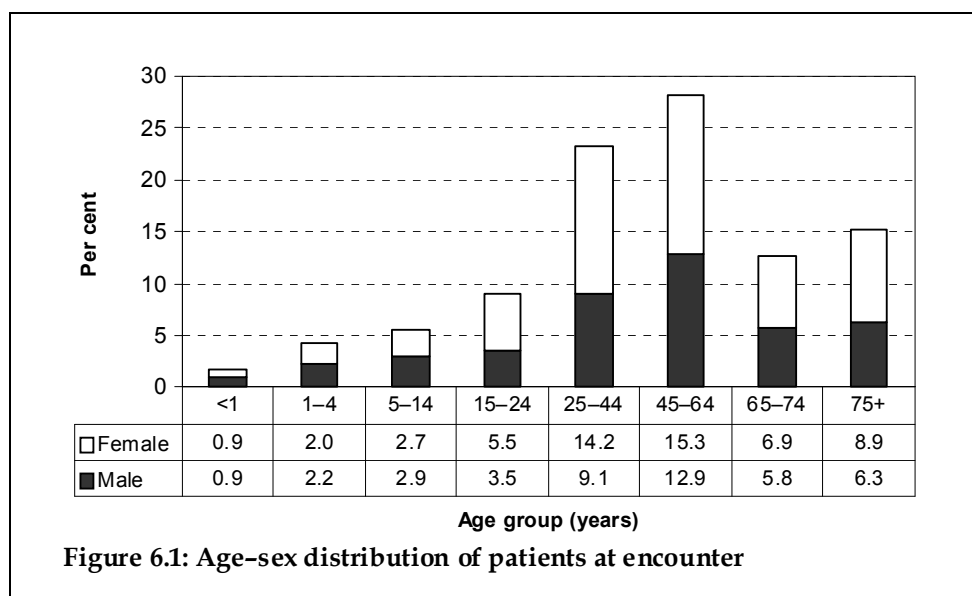
The age–sex distribution of patients at the 91,805 encounters is shown in Figure 6.1. Females accounted for the greater proportion of encounters (56.3%). This was reflected across all age groups except for children aged less than 15 years (Figure 6.1).

Patients aged less than 25 years accounted for 20.6% of encounters; those aged 25–44 years accounted for 23.3% of encounters, patients aged 45–64 years accounted for 28.2% and those aged 65 years or older accounted for 27.9% of encounters.

### Other patient characteristics

Table 6.1 provides a view of other characteristics of the patients. In summary:

- The patient was new to the practice at 8.6% of encounters.
- Over 40% of encounters were with patients who held a Commonwealth concession card and 3.1% were with persons who held a Repatriation health card.
- At 7.1% of encounters the patient was from a non-English-speaking background.
- At 0.9% of encounters the patient identified themselves as an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander.



*Note:* Missing data removed. The distributions will not agree perfectly with those in Table 6.1 because of missing data in either age or sex fields.

**Table 6.1: Characteristics of the patients at encounters, 2006–07**

Patient variable	Number	Per cent of encounters ( <i>n</i> = 91,805)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Sex (missing = 765) <sup>(a)</sup>				
Males	39,757	43.7	42.9	44.5
Females	51,284	56.3	55.5	57.1
Age group (missing = 779) <sup>(a)</sup>				
<1 year	1,669	1.8	1.7	2.0
1–4 years	3,763	4.1	3.9	4.4
5–14 years	5,091	5.6	5.3	5.9
15–24 years	8,261	9.1	8.6	9.5
25–44 years	21,173	23.3	22.6	24.0
45–64 years	25,645	28.2	27.6	28.7
65–74 years	11,566	12.7	12.2	13.2
75+ years	13,857	15.2	14.4	16.0
Other characteristics <sup>(b)</sup>				
New patient to practice	7,745	8.6	7.9	9.4
Commonwealth concession card	38,071	41.5	39.9	43.0
Repatriation health card	2,815	3.1	2.8	3.3
Non-English-speaking background	6,563	7.1	5.8	8.5
Aboriginal person	739	0.8	0.6	1.1
Torres Strait Islander	53	0.1	0.0	0.1
Aboriginal person and Torres Strait Islander	29	0.0	0.0	0.1

(a) Missing data removed.

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

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

## Patient reasons for encounter

International interest in reasons for encounter (RFEs) has been developing over the past three decades. RFEs reflect the patient's demand for care and can provide an indication of service utilisation patterns, which may benefit from intervention on a population level.<sup>57</sup>

RFEs are those concerns and expectations that patients bring to the GP. 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. These reflect the patient's view of their reasons for consulting the GP. 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 multiple symptoms that relate to a single problem managed at the encounter or may describe one RFE that relates to multiple problems.

## Number of reasons for encounter

Table 6.2 shows the number of RFEs presented by patients at encounters. At 61% of encounters only one RFE was recorded. Patients presented on average with 150.8 RFEs per 100 encounters, or 1.5 RFEs per encounter (Table 6.3).

**Table 6.2: Number of patient reasons for encounter, 2006–07**

Number of RFEs at encounter	Number of encounters (n = 91,805)	Per cent of encounters	95% LCL	95% UCL
One RFE	55,673	60.6	59.4	61.9
Two RFEs	25,633	27.9	27.2	28.7
Three RFEs	10,498	11.4	10.7	12.2
<b>Total</b>	91,805	100.0	—	—

Note: RFEs—reasons for encounter; LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit.

## Reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter

The distribution of patient RFEs by ICPC-2 chapter and the most common RFEs within each chapter are presented in Table 6.3. Each chapter and individual RFE is expressed as a percentage of all RFEs and as a rate per 100 encounters with 95% confidence limits.

**Table 6.3: Distribution of patient reasons for encounter, by ICPC-2 chapter and most frequent individual reasons for encounter within chapter, 2006–07**

Reasons for encounter	Number	Per cent of total RFEs <sup>(a)</sup> (n = 138,434)	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(b)</sup> (n = 91,805)	95% LCL	95% UCL
<b>General &amp; unspecified</b>	<b>34,638</b>	<b>25.0</b>	<b>37.7</b>	<b>36.7</b>	<b>38.8</b>
Prescription NOS	7,583	5.5	8.3	7.7	8.8
Results tests/procedures NOS	5,302	3.8	5.8	5.4	6.1
Check-up—general*	3,629	2.6	4.0	3.7	4.2
Immunisation/vaccination—general	1,825	1.3	2.0	1.8	2.2
Fever	1,671	1.2	1.8	1.6	2.0
Administrative procedure NOS	1,501	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.8
Weakness/tiredness	1,252	0.9	1.4	1.2	1.5
Blood test NOS	1,114	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.4
Chest pain NOS	1,073	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.3
Other reason for encounter NEC	957	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.2
Other referrals NEC	818	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0
Observation/health educat/advice/diet NOS	778	0.6	0.8	0.8	0.9
Trauma/injury NOS	734	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Follow-up encounter unspecified NOS	698	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.9
Clarify/discuss patient RFE/demand NOS	643	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8

(continued)

**Table 6.3 (continued): Distribution of patient reasons for encounter, by ICPC-2 chapter and most frequent individual reasons for encounter within chapter, 2006-07**

Reasons for encounter	Number	Per cent of total RFEs <sup>(a)</sup> (n = 138,434)	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(b)</sup> (n = 91,805)	95% LCL	95% UCL
<b>Respiratory</b>	<b>19,025</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>20.7</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>21.6</b>
Cough	5,318	3.8	5.8	5.4	6.2
Throat complaint	3,071	2.2	3.3	3.1	3.6
Upper respiratory tract infection	2,172	1.6	2.4	2.1	2.7
Immunisation/vaccination—respiratory	1,969	1.4	2.1	1.8	2.5
Nasal congestion/sneezing	998	0.7	1.1	0.9	1.2
Asthma	748	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Shortness of breath, dyspnoea	730	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
<b>Musculoskeletal</b>	<b>14,812</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>16.1</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>16.6</b>
Back complaint*	2,961	2.1	3.2	3.0	3.4
Knee complaint	1,174	0.8	1.3	1.2	1.4
Shoulder complaint	1,083	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.3
Foot/toe complaint	1,044	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.2
Leg/thigh complaint	963	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.1
Neck complaint	795	0.6	0.9	0.8	0.9
Injury musculoskeletal NOS	717	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
<b>Skin</b>	<b>14,421</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>16.3</b>
Rash*	2,591	1.9	2.8	2.6	3.0
Skin complaint	1,294	0.9	1.4	1.3	1.5
Check-up—skin*	1,232	0.9	1.3	1.1	1.6
Swelling*	1,039	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.2
<b>Cardiovascular</b>	<b>10,314</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>10.7</b>	<b>11.8</b>
Check-up—cardiovascular*	4,845	3.5	5.3	4.9	5.6
Hypertension/high blood pressure*	1,953	1.4	2.1	1.8	2.5
Prescription—cardiovascular	652	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
<b>Digestive</b>	<b>9,283</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>10.5</b>
Abdominal pain*	1,645	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.9
Diarrhoea	1,228	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.5
Vomiting	943	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.1
<b>Psychological</b>	<b>6,847</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>7.8</b>
Depression*	1,781	1.3	1.9	1.8	2.1
Sleep disturbance	976	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
Anxiety*	928	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.1

(continued)

**Table 6.3 (continued): Distribution of patient reasons for encounter, by ICPC-2 chapter and most frequent individual reasons for encounter within chapter, 2006–07**

Reasons for encounter	Number	Per cent of total RFEs <sup>(a)</sup> (n = 138,434)	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(b)</sup> (n = 91,805)	95% LCL	95% UCL
<b>Endocrine &amp; metabolic</b>	<b>5,911</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>6.8</b>
Prescription—endocrine/metabolic	834	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0
Diabetes (non-gestational)*	1,001	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
Check-up—endocrine/metabolic*	709	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Blood test—endocrine/metabolic	640	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
<b>Female genital system</b>	<b>4,637</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.4</b>
Female genital check-up/pap smear*	1,645	1.2	1.8	1.6	2.0
Menstrual problems*	711	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
<b>Neurological</b>	<b>4,513</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>
Headache	1,444	1.0	1.6	1.4	1.7
Vertigo/dizziness	1,016	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
<b>Ear</b>	<b>3,255</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.7</b>
Ear pain	1,285	0.9	1.4	1.3	1.5
<b>Pregnancy &amp; family planning</b>	<b>3,022</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.6</b>
Pre/postnatal check-up*	768	0.6	0.8	0.7	1.0
Oral contraception*	660	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
<b>Urology</b>	<b>2,370</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>Eye</b>	<b>2,329</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.7</b>
<b>Male genital system</b>	<b>1,128</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.3</b>
<b>Blood</b>	<b>1,123</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.4</b>
<b>Social</b>	<b>806</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.8</b>	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Total RFEs</b>	<b>138,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>150.8</b>	<b>148.9</b>	<b>152.7</b>

(a) Only those individual RFEs accounting for  $\geq 0.5\%$  of total RFEs are included.

(b) Figures do not total 100 as more than one RFE can be recorded at each encounter.

\* Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm)>).

Note: RFEs—reasons for encounter; LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; NOS—not otherwise specified; NEC—not elsewhere classified.

## Distribution of RFEs by ICPC-2 component

The distribution of patient RFEs by ICPC-2 component is presented in Table 6.4 expressed as a percentage of all RFEs and as a rate per 100 encounters with 95% confidence limits. Nearly half (45.1%) of patient RFEs were expressed in terms of symptoms or complaints (for example 'tired', 'fever'). RFEs were described in diagnostic terms for 18.5% of RFEs (for example 'I am here about my diabetes', 'I think I have depression'). The remaining 36.4% of RFEs were described in terms of processes of care, such as requests for a health check, to renew scripts, to get a referral, find out test results or get a medical certificate.

**Table 6.4: Distribution of RFEs by ICPC-2 component, 2006–07**

ICPC-2 component	Number	Per cent of total RFEs (n = 138,434)	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (n = 91,805)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Symptoms & complaints	62,363	45.1	67.9	66.1	69.8
Diagnoses, diseases	25,575	18.5	27.9	26.2	29.5
Diagnostic & preventive procedures	22,759	16.4	24.8	23.8	25.7
Medications, treatments & therapeutics	12,999	9.4	14.2	13.5	14.8
Referrals & other RFEs	6,729	4.9	7.3	6.9	7.8
Results	6,312	4.6	6.9	6.5	7.3
Administrative	1,697	1.2	1.9	1.7	2.0
<b>Total RFEs</b>	<b>138,343</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>150.8</b>	<b>148.9</b>	<b>152.7</b>

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

Note: RFEs—reasons for encounter; LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit.

### Most frequent patient reasons for encounter

The 30 most commonly recorded RFEs, listed in order of frequency in Table 6.5, accounted for more than half of all RFEs. In this analysis the specific ICPC-2 chapter to which an across-chapter RFE belongs is disregarded, so that, for example, 'check-up—all' includes all check-ups from all body systems irrespective of whether the type was specified.

Of the top 30 most common RFEs, 18 were descriptive of symptoms such as cough, throat & back complaints and rash. However, four of the top five RFEs reflected requests for a process of care (that is, requests for check-ups, prescriptions, test results and immunisations) and together accounted for a quarter of all RFEs (24.9%) (Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5: Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, 2006–07**

Patient reason for encounter	Number	Per cent of total RFEs (n = 138,434)	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (n = 91,805)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Check-up—all*	13,367	9.7	14.6	13.9	15.2
Prescription—all*	10,800	7.8	11.8	11.2	12.4
Test results*	6,312	4.6	6.9	6.5	7.3
Cough	5,318	3.8	5.8	5.4	6.2
Immunisation/vaccination—all*	3,956	2.9	4.3	3.9	4.7
Throat complaint	3,071	2.2	3.3	3.1	3.6
Back complaint*	2,961	2.1	3.2	3.0	3.4
Rash*	2,591	1.9	2.8	2.6	3.0
Upper respiratory tract infection	2,172	1.6	2.4	2.1	2.7
Hypertension/high blood pressure*	1,953	1.4	2.1	1.8	2.5
Depression*	1,781	1.3	1.9	1.8	2.1
Fever	1,671	1.2	1.8	1.6	2.0
Abdominal pain*	1,645	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.9
Administrative procedure NOS	1,501	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.8

(continued)

**Table 6.5 (continued): Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, 2006–07**

Patient reason for encounter	Number	Per cent of total RFEs (n = 138,434)	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (= 91,805)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Headache	1,444	1.0	1.6	1.4	1.7
Skin complaint	1,294	0.9	1.4	1.3	1.5
Ear pain	1,285	0.9	1.4	1.3	1.5
Weakness/tiredness	1,252	0.9	1.4	1.2	1.5
Diarrhoea	1,228	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.5
Knee complaint	1,174	0.8	1.3	1.2	1.4
Blood test NOS	1,114	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.4
Shoulder complaint	1,083	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.3
Chest pain NOS	1,073	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.3
Foot/toe complaint	1,044	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.2
Swelling*	1,039	0.8	1.1	1.0	1.2
Vertigo/dizziness	1,016	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
Diabetes—all*	1,010	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
Nasal congestion/sneezing	998	0.7	1.1	0.9	1.2
Sleep disturbance	976	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
Leg/thigh complaint	963	0.7	1.0	1.0	1.1
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>77,092</i>	<i>55.7</i>	—	—	—
<b>Total RFEs</b>	<b>138,434</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>150.8</b>	<b>148.9</b>	<b>152.7</b>

(a) Figures do not total 100 as more than one RFE can be recorded at each encounter. Also, only the most frequent RFEs are included.

\* Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm)>).

Note: RFEs—reasons for encounter; LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; NOS—not otherwise specified.

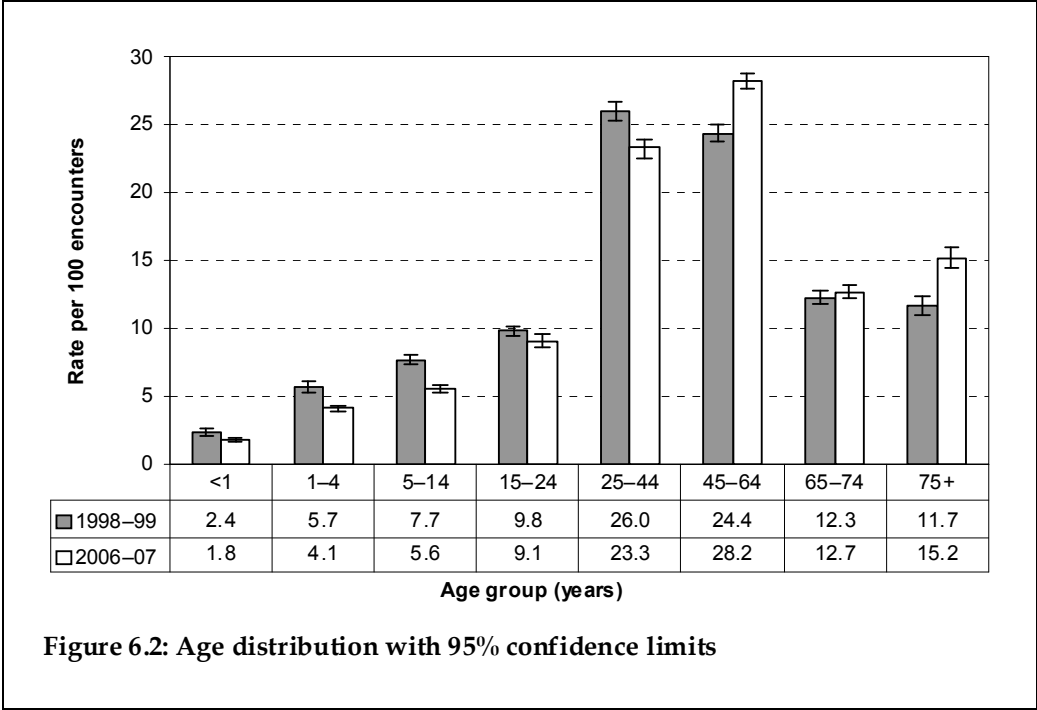
## 6.2 Changes over time, 1998–99 to 2006–07

### Age–sex distribution of patients at encounter

Figure 6.2 shows that between 1998–99 and 2006–07 the proportion of encounters that were with patients aged 45–64 years increased from 24.4% to 28.2%. The proportion that were with patients 75 years or older also increased from 11.7% to 15.2%. At the same time, there was a decrease in the proportion of encounters that were with younger patients. Specifically, encounters with patients aged less than 1 year decreased from 2.4% to 1.8% of all encounters, those with patients aged 1–4 years from 5.7% to 4.1% and those with patients 5–14 years from 7.7% to 5.6%. There was also a significant decrease in the proportion of encounters that were with patients aged 25–44 years, from 26.0% in 1998–99 to 23.3% in 2006–07.

Table 6.6 shows that there was a large decrease in encounters with patients aged less than 45 years (from 51.6% in 1998–99 to 43.9% in 2006–07). This represents an extrapolated decrease of more than 8 million encounters with patients aged 0–44 years nationally from 1998–99 to 2006–07. There was a concomitant estimated national increase of about 7.6 million encounters with patients aged 45 years and over.

From 1998–99 to 2006–07 there was been a trend towards an increase in the proportion of males at general practice encounters. This trend was tested using simple linear regression analysis (which accounted for the cluster sample design) and found to represent a significant increase, equivalent to an annual increase of 0.17% encounters with male patients ( $t = 3.4, p < 0.001, df = 8,920$ ).



**Other patient characteristics**

Table 6.6 shows that the proportion of encounters with patients holding a Commonwealth concession card fluctuated over the years. Initially it decreased from 43.1% in 1998–99 to a low of 36.7% in 2000–01, then increased to a high of 43.2% in 2004–05 from which it has decreased to the current level of 41.5%.



**Table 6.6: Characteristics of the patients at encounters, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

Patient variable	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)									Change <sup>(a)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
Sex (missing n) <sup>(b)</sup>	(1,474)	(1,182)	(1,111)	(809)	(911)	(932)	(809)	(788)	(765)	—	—
Male	42.3 (41.6–43.0)	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)	—	—
Female	57.7 (57.0–58.4)	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)	—	—
Age group (missing n) <sup>(b)</sup>	(1,023)	(804)	(846)	(760)	(895)	(905)	(925)	(769)	(779)	—	—
< 1 year	2.4 (2.2–2.6)	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)	↓	–630
1–4 years	5.7 (5.3–6.0)	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)	↓	–1,680
5–14 years	7.7 (7.3–8.1)	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)	↓	–2,210
15–24 years	9.8 (9.4–10.2)	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)	—	—
25–44 years	26.0 (25.3–26.7)	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)	↓	–2,960
45–64 years	24.4 (23.8–25.0)	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)	↑	+3,740
65–74 years	12.3 (11.7–12.8)	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)	—	—
75+ years	11.7 (11.1–12.4)	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)	↑	+3,520

(continued)

**Table 6.6 (continued): Characteristics of the patients at encounters, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

Patient variable	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)									Change <sup>(a)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
Other characteristics <sup>(c)</sup>											
New patient to practice	9.1 (8.5–9.7)	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)	—	—
Commonwealth concession card	43.1 (41.7–44.5)	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)	§	—
Repatriation health card <sup>(d)</sup>	3.4 (3.1–3.6)	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)	—	—
Non-English-speaking background	14.5 (12.9–16.0)	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)	§	—
Aboriginal person and/or Torres Strait Islander	1.2 (0.9–1.5)	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)	§	—

(a) The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2006–07 is indicated for each variable: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and — indicates there was no change. Statistically significant linear changes have been extrapolated to estimate the national average annual change and are reported in thousands in the far right column.

(b) Missing data removed.

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

(d) The 1998–99 and 1999–00 results published here include patients who held either a gold or white Repatriation health card; previously published figures only included patients who held the gold card.

Note: CI—confidence interval.

## Patient reasons for encounter

### Number of reasons for encounter

Table 6.7 shows there has been a decrease in the proportion of patients giving a single RFE, from 63.4% in 1998–99 to 60.6% in 2006–07, equating to a national decrease of over 3 million single RFE encounters. To balance this there has been an increase in the proportion of encounters at which three RFEs are recorded, from 9.7% in 1998–99 to 11.4% in 2006–07, suggesting approximately 1.5 million more encounters nationally where three RFEs were reported in 2006–07 than in 1998–99.

### Reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter

Table 6.8 shows that between 1998–99 and 2006–07 there has been:

- a significant increase in the overall rate of RFEs, from 146.3 per 100 encounters in 1998–99 to 150.8 per 100 encounters in 2006–07. This increase equates to approximately 3.6 million extra RFEs nationally in 2006–07 than in 1998–99
- a 40% increase in the rate of general and unspecified RFEs, equating to an approximate increase of over 11 million general and unspecified RFEs from 1998–99 to 2006–07 nationally
- a 14% increase in the rate RFEs related to the endocrine and metabolic systems, equating to a national increase of about 780,000 encounters where RFEs associated with the endocrine and metabolic systems were recorded nationally
- a 17% decrease in the rate of respiratory related RFEs equating to a decrease of approximately 4.4 million encounters with respiratory RFEs nationally
- a 20% decrease in the rate of ear related RFEs equating to a decrease of roughly 960,000 encounters with ear related RFEs nationally
- a significant decrease in the rate of RFEs related to the blood and blood-forming organs by a third, equating to a decrease of about 630,000 encounters with such RFEs.

### Distribution of RFEs by ICPC-2 component

Table 6.9 shows that between 1998–99 and 2006–07:

- requests for test results doubled, equating to an increase of roughly 3.6 million encounters with such requests in 2006–07 than in 1998–99
- there has been a 70% increase in the rate of requests for an administrative procedure (such as a medical certificate), equating to an increase of approximately 810,000 requests for an administrative procedure nationally
- patient requests for medications, treatments and therapeutics (such as repeat prescriptions) increased by a third, resulting in about 3.9 million requests of this type nationally in 2006–07 than in 1998–99
- there was a slight increase in the rate of requests for a diagnostic or preventative procedure. This increase equates to approximately 2.3 million additional RFEs of this type in 2006–07 than in 1998–99. Diagnostic and preventative procedures include health examinations, check-ups, blood tests, pap smears.

RFEs expressed in terms of a symptom or complaint (for example 'tired', 'feeling anxious') were the most frequent. The presentation rate of symptoms or complaints has fluctuated over the years. It increased between 1998–99 and 2000–01, and has been decreasing ever since. The rate at which patients described their RFE in terms of a specific diagnosis or disease decreased steadily between 1998–99 and 2004–05 but over the most recent years has been increasing.

There was a 60% increase in patients describing their RFEs as a need for a referral or that the encounter was initiated by someone other than the patient between 1998–99 and 1999–00. Since then the rate has been fairly consistent.

### **Most frequent patient reasons for encounter**

Table 6.10 shows that between 1998–99 and 2006–07:

- the rate at which patients cited a need to get their prescription(s) as an RFE has increased by 40%, equating to an increase of about 3.6 million encounters with this RFE
- the rate of patient attendance to secure test results has doubled, equating to an increase of 3.6 million encounters with an RFE of this type in 2006–07 than in 1998–99
- requests or a need for an administrative procedure has also doubled, equating to about 820,000 extra encounters with administrative procedure requests in 2006–07 than in 1998–99
- there was also a slight increase in the number of RFEs describing unspecified skin complaints
- the rate of requests for unspecified blood tests as a RFE increased by 70%, equating to roughly a half a million extra encounters with this RFE
- the presentation rate of ear pain decreased by a quarter, equating to 530,000 fewer encounters where ear pain was the reported RFE
- there was a 20% decrease in the presentation rate of abdominal pain, a 15% decrease in the rate of headache and a 25% decrease in the rate of neck pain
- patient presentations regarding asthma decreased by over 40% and the rate of acute bronchitis/bronchiolitis as an RFE halved. These two decreases combined suggests that there were approximately one million fewer encounters with RFEs of this type in 2006–07 than in 1998–99, which would partly explain the decrease in the rate of RFEs related to the respiratory system (Table 6.8).

**Table 6.7: Number of patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

Number of reasons for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)									Change <sup>(a)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
One RFE	63.4 (62.3–64.6)	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)	↓	–3,320
Two RFEs	26.8 (26.1–27.5)	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)	—	—
Three RFEs	9.7 (9.2–10.4)	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)	↑	+1,680

(a) The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2006–07 is indicated for each variable: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change and — indicates there was no change. Statistically significant linear changes have been extrapolated to estimate the national average annual change and are reported in thousands in the far right column.

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFEs—reasons for encounter.

**Table 6.8: Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

ICPC-2 Chapter	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (95% CI)									Change <sup>(b)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
General & unspecified	26.6 (25.7–27.4)	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)	↑	+11,220
Respiratory	24.8 (24.0–25.6)	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)	↓	–4,390
Musculoskeletal	16.7 (16.1–17.4)	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)	§	—
Skin	15.1 (14.6–15.5)	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)	—	—
Cardiovascular	11.4 (10.9–12.0)	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)	—	—
Digestive	10.6 (10.3–10.9)	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)	—	—

(continued)

**Table 6.8 (continued): Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

ICPC-2 Chapter	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (95% CI)									Change <sup>(b)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
Psychological	7.6 (7.2–8.0)	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)	—	—
Endocrine & metabolic	5.6 (5.3–5.9)	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)	↑	+780
Female genital system	5.3 (5.0–5.7)	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)	—	—
Neurological	5.3 (5.1–5.5)	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)	§	—
Ear	4.5 (4.3–4.7)	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)	↓	–960
Pregnancy & family planning	3.4 (3.4–4.0)	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)	—	—
Urology	2.5 (2.3–2.6)	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)	—	—
Eye	2.7 (2.7–3.0)	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)	—	—
Male genital system	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	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)	—	—
Blood	1.8 (1.6–2.0)	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)	↓	–630
Social problems	0.9 (0.7–1.1)	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)	—	—
<b>Total RFEs</b>	<b>146.3</b> <b>(144.6–148.0)</b>	<b>148.5</b> <b>(146.7–150.2)</b>	<b>151.0</b> <b>(149.2–152.8)</b>	<b>149.2</b> <b>(147.4–150.9)</b>	<b>150.9</b> <b>(149.0–152.7)</b>	<b>150.2</b> <b>(148.4–152.0)</b>	<b>149.6</b> <b>(147.8–151.5)</b>	<b>150.3</b> <b>(148.4–152.2)</b>	<b>150.8</b> <b>(148.9–152.7)</b>	<b>↑</b>	<b>+3,600</b>

(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 1998–99 to 2006–07 is indicated for each variable: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and—indicates there was no change. Statistically significant linear changes have been extrapolated to estimate the national average annual change and are reported in thousands in the far right column.

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

**Table 6.9: Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 component, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998-99 to 2006-07**

ICPC component	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (95% CI)									Change <sup>(b)</sup>	
	1998-99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
Symptoms & complaints	71.1 (69.4-72.9)	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)	§	—
Diagnosis, diseases	33.6 (31.9-35.2)	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)	§	—
Diagnostic & preventive procedures	22.4 (21.5-23.3)	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)	↑	+2,310
Medications, treatments & therapeutics	10.3 (9.8-10.9)	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)	↑	+3,940
Referral & other RFE	4.4 (4.0-4.7)	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)	§	—
Results	3.4 (3.1-3.7)	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)	↑	+3,570
Administrative	1.1 (0.9-1.2)	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)	↑	+810
<b>Total RFEs</b>	<b>146.3</b> <b>(144.6-148.0)</b>	<b>148.5</b> <b>(146.7-150.2)</b>	<b>151.0</b> <b>(149.2-152.8)</b>	<b>149.2</b> <b>(147.4-150.9)</b>	<b>150.9</b> <b>(149.0-152.7)</b>	<b>150.2</b> <b>(148.4-152.0)</b>	<b>149.6</b> <b>(147.8-151.5)</b>	<b>150.3</b> <b>(148.4-152.2)</b>	<b>150.8</b> <b>(148.9-152.7)</b>	<b>↑</b>	<b>+3,600</b>

(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 1998-99 to 2006-07 is indicated for each variable: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and — indicates there was no change. Statistically significant linear changes have been extrapolated to estimate the national average annual change and are reported in thousands in the far right column.

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

**Table 6.10: Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (95% CI)									Change <sup>(b)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
Check-up—all*	13.6 (13.0–14.3)	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)	—	—
Prescription—all*	8.2 (7.7–8.7)	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)	↑	+3,640
Test results*	3.4 (3.1–3.7)	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)	↑	+3,570
Cough	6.2 (5.8–6.6)	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)	§	—
Immunisation/vaccination—all*	4.9 (4.5–5.3)	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)	§	—
Throat complaint	3.8 (3.5–4.1)	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)	§	—
Back complaint*	3.6 (3.3–3.8)	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)	§	—
Rash*	2.6 (2.4–2.8)	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)	—	—
Upper respiratory tract infection	2.9 (2.6–3.2)	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)	§	—
Hypertension/high blood pressure*	2.5 (2.2–2.8)	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)	—	—
Depression*	2.1 (2.0–2.3)	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)	—	—
Fever	1.8 (1.6–2.0)	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)	—	—
Abdominal pain*	2.2 (2.1–2.4)	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)	↓	–430

(continued)



**Table 6.10 (continued): Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (95% CI)									Change <sup>(b)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
Administrative procedure NOS	0.8 (0.8–0.9)	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)	↑	+820
Headache	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	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)	↓	–320
Skin complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	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)	↑	+200
Ear pain	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	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)	↓	–530
Weakness/tiredness	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	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)	—	—
Diarrhoea	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	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)	—	—
Knee complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	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)	—	—
Blood test NOS	0.7 (0.6–0.9)	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)	↑	+510
Shoulder complaint	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	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)	—	—
Chest pain NOS	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	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)	—	—
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)	1.2 (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)	—	—
Swelling*	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	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)	—	—
Vertigo/dizziness	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	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)	—	—

(continued)

**Table 6.10 (continued): Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2006–07**

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters <sup>(a)</sup> (95% CI)									Change <sup>(b)</sup>	
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	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)	↑ ↓	('000)
Diabetes—all*	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	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)	§	—
Nasal congestion/sneezing	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	1.7 (1.4–1.9)	1.6 (1.4–1.8)	1.5 (1.3–1.7)	1.7 (1.4–2.0)	1.3 (1.1–1.5)	1.4 (1.2–1.6)	1.3 (1.1–1.6)	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	§	—
Sleep disturbance	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	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)	—	—
Leg/thigh complaint	1.0 (1.0–1.1)	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)	—	—
Vomiting	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	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)	—	—
Anxiety*	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	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)	—	—
Neck complaint	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 (1.0–1.2)	0.9 (0.9–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–0.9)	↓	–320
Asthma	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	↓	–630
Oral contraception*	0.9 (0.8–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	↓	–210
Acute bronchitis/bronchiolitis	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.6 (0.5–0.7)	0.6 (0.5–0.7)	0.5 (0.4–0.6)	0.5 (0.4–0.6)	0.5 (0.4–0.6)	0.6 (0.5–0.7)	0.5 (0.4–0.5)	↓	–520
<b>Total RFEs</b>	<b>146.3</b> <b>(144.6–148.0)</b>	<b>148.5</b> <b>(146.7–150.2)</b>	<b>151.0</b> <b>(149.2–152.8)</b>	<b>149.2</b> <b>(147.4–150.9)</b>	<b>150.9</b> <b>(149.0–152.7)</b>	<b>150.2</b> <b>(148.4–152.0)</b>	<b>149.6</b> <b>(147.8–151.5)</b>	<b>150.3</b> <b>(148.4–152.2)</b>	<b>150.8</b> <b>(148.9–152.7)</b>	<b>↑</b>	<b>+3,600</b>

(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 1998–99 to 2006–07 is indicated for each variable: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, ↗/↘ indicates a marginal change, § indicates a non-linear significant change, and — indicates there was no change. Statistically significant linear changes have been extrapolated to estimate the national average annual change and are reported in thousands in the far right column.

\* Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm>).

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