

8 Overview of management

The BEACH survey form allowed GPs to record several aspects of patient management for each problem managed at each encounter. Pharmaceutical management is recorded in detail. Other modes of treatment, including clinical treatments (for example, counselling) and procedures recorded briefly in the GP's own words, are also related to a single problem. Provision is made on the form for referrals and hospital admissions, and for pathology and imaging test orders, to be related to a single or multiple problems (see Appendix 1).

A summary of management at general practice encounters from 1998–99 to 2007–08 are reported for each year in the 10 year report *General practice activity in Australia 1998–99 to 2007–08: 10 year data tables*, see <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19>.

At the 95,898 recorded encounters, GPs undertook 211,029 management activities in total. The most common management form was medication, either prescribed, GP-supplied, or advised for over-the-counter purchase. 'Other treatments' were the second most common management activity, with clinical treatments occurring more frequently than procedural treatments (Table 8.1).

For an 'average' 100 GP–patient encounters, GPs provided 82 prescriptions, provided 35 clinical treatments, undertook 17 procedures, made 8 referrals to specialists and 4 to allied health services, and placed 43 pathology test orders and 10 imaging test orders.

Table 8.1: Summary of management

Management type	Number	Rate per 100 encounters (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL	Rate per 100 problems (n = 145,078)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Medications	98,439	102.7	100.3	105.0	67.9	66.5	69.2
Prescribed	79,051	82.4	80.3	84.6	54.5	53.2	55.8
GP-supplied	9,702	10.1	9.5	10.7	6.7	6.3	7.1
Advised OTC	9,686	10.1	9.3	10.9	6.7	6.2	7.2
Other treatments	49,130	51.2	48.9	53.6	33.9	32.4	35.3
Clinical	33,121	34.5	32.5	36.5	22.8	21.6	24.1
Procedural	16,009	16.7	15.9	17.5	11.0	10.5	11.6
Referrals	12,008	12.5	12.0	13.0	8.3	8.0	8.6
Specialist	7,647	8.0	7.6	8.3	5.3	5.1	5.5
Allied health	3,305	3.5	3.2	3.7	2.3	2.1	2.4
Hospital	381	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3
Emergency department	210	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.2
Other medical services	83	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Other referral	382	0.4	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.3
Pathology	41,375	43.2	41.3	45.0	28.5	27.4	29.6
Imaging	9,143	9.5	9.2	9.9	6.3	6.1	6.5
Other investigations ordered ^(a)	934	1.0	0.9	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.7
Total management activities	211,029	220.1	—	—	145.5	—	—

(a) Other investigations reported here only include those ordered by the GP. Other investigations in Chapter 12 include those ordered by the GP and those done at the surgery.

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; OTC—over-the-counter.

Another perspective emerges in analysis of the number of encounters or problems for which at least one form of management was recorded by the GP (Table 8.2). At least one management action was recorded at 91.9% of encounters and for 86.3% of problems managed.

- At least one medication or other treatment was given for nearly three-quarters of the problems managed.
- At least one medication (most commonly prescribed) was prescribed, supplied or advised for more than half the problems managed.
- At least one other treatment (most commonly clinical) was provided for nearly one-third of problems managed.
- At least one referral (most commonly to a specialist) was made for 8% of problems managed.
- At least one investigation (most commonly pathology) was requested for 18% of problems managed (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2: Encounters and problems for which management was recorded

Management type	Number of encounters	Per cent of total encounters ^(a) (n = 95,898)	Number of problems	Per cent of total problems ^(a) (n = 145,078)
At least one management type	88,098	91.9	125,160	86.3
At least one medication or other treatment	78,792	82.2	106,252	73.2
At least one medication	61,715	63.4	78,454	54.1
At least one prescription	51,369	53.6	64,484	44.4
At least one GP-supplied	7,583	7.9	7,758	5.3
At least one OTC advised	8,568	8.9	8,821	6.1
At least one other treatment	38,222	39.9	43,877	30.2
At least one clinical treatment	26,374	27.5	29,937	20.6
At least one procedural treatment	14,420	15.0	14,974	10.3
At least one referral	11,302	11.8	12,024	8.3
At least one referral to a specialist	7,360	7.7	7,735	5.3
At least one referral to allied health	3,193	3.1	3,338	2.3
At least one referral to hospital	381	0.4	394	0.3
At least one referral to emergency department	210	0.2	221	0.2
At least one referral to other medical services	83	0.1	88	0.1
At least one referral NOS	380	0.4	398	0.3
At least one investigation	22,846	23.8	26,247	18.1
At least one pathology order	16,639	17.4	19,033	13.1
At least one imaging order	7,958	8.3	8,205	5.7
At least one other investigation ^(b)	887	0.9	908	0.6

(a) Figures will not total 100, as multiple events may occur in one encounter or in the management of one problem at encounter.

(b) Other investigations reported here only include those ordered by the GP. Other investigations in Chapter 12 include those ordered by the GP and those done at the surgery.

Note: OTC—over-the-counter; NOS—not otherwise specified.

The combinations of management types related to each problem were then investigated. The majority of treatments occurred either as a single component or in combination with one other component. Management was provided:

- as a single component for almost two-thirds of the problems managed
- as a double component for 19% of problems managed
- rarely with more than two components (results not tabled).

Table 8.3 lists the most common management combinations. Medication alone was the most common management, followed by the combination of a medication and a clinical treatment. When a problem was referred to another health professional it was most likely that no other treatments were given for the problem at the encounter. This situation also applied to pathology testing.

Table 8.3: Most common management combinations

1+ medication	1+ clinical treatment	1+ procedural treatment	1+ referral	1+ imaging order	1+ pathology order	Per cent of total problems (n = 145,078)	Per cent of total encounters (n = 95,898)
No recorded management						13.7	8.1
1+ management recorded						86.3	91.9
✓						37.2	31.6
	✓					9.8	7.2
✓	✓					6.4	10.4
					✓	5.1	2.9
		✓				4.5	3.9
			✓			4.2	3.2
✓					✓	2.8	4.4
✓		✓				2.7	4.4
				✓		2.3	1.8
✓			✓			1.3	2.8
		✓			✓	1.3	1.3
	✓				✓	1.2	1.4
✓				✓		1.1	1.9
	✓		✓			0.9	1.1
✓	✓				✓	0.6	1.7
				✓	✓	0.5	0.6
✓	✓		✓			0.3	1.1
✓		✓			✓	0.3	1.0
	✓	✓				0.3	0.7
			✓		✓	0.3	0.4
	✓			✓		0.3	0.4

Note: 1+—at least one specified management type.