

7 Problems managed

A 'problem managed' is a formal statement of the provider's understanding of a health problem presented by the patient, family or community, and can be described in terms of a disease, symptom or complaint, social problem or ill-defined condition managed at the encounter. As GPs were instructed to record each problem at the most specific level possible from the information available, the problem managed may at times be limited to the level of a presenting symptom.

At each patient encounter, up to four problems could be recorded by the GP. A minimum of one problem was compulsory. The status of each problem to the patient – new (first presentation to a medical practitioner) or old (follow-up of previous problem) – was also indicated. The concept of a principal diagnosis, which is often used in hospital statistics, is not adopted in studies of general practice where multiple problem management is the norm rather than the exception. Further, the range of problems managed at the encounter often crosses multiple body systems and may include undiagnosed symptoms, psychosocial problems or chronic disease, which makes the designation of a principal diagnosis difficult. Thus the order in which the problems were recorded by the GP is not significant. All problems managed in general practice are included in this section, including those that involved management by a practice nurse. Problems that specifically included management by a practice nurse are reported additionally in Chapter 13.

There are two ways to describe the relative frequency of problems managed: as a percentage of all problems managed in the study, or as a rate of problems managed per 100 encounters. Where groups of problems are reported (for example, cardiovascular problems), it must be remembered that more than one of that type of problem (such as hypertension and heart failure) may have been managed at a single encounter. In considering these results, the reader must be mindful that although a rate per 100 encounters for a single ungrouped problem (for example, asthma, 2.2 per 100 encounters) can be regarded as equivalent to 'asthma is managed at 2.2% of encounters', such a statement cannot be made for grouped concepts (ICPC-2 chapters and those marked with asterisks in the tables).

Data on problems managed in Australian general practice from the BEACH study are reported for each year from 1998–99 to 2007–08 in the 10 year summary report *General practice activity in Australia 1998–99 to 2007–08: 10 year data tables* available from www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19 (AIHW catalogue number GEP 23).

7.1 Number of problems managed at encounter

There were 145,078 problems managed, at a rate of 151.3 per 100 encounters. Table 7.1 shows the number of problems managed at each encounter. Only one problem was managed at more than 60% of encounters, two problems were managed at one-quarter of encounters and almost 1 in 10 encounters (8.8%) involved the management of three problems. The management of four problems at an encounter was less common (2.7% of encounters).

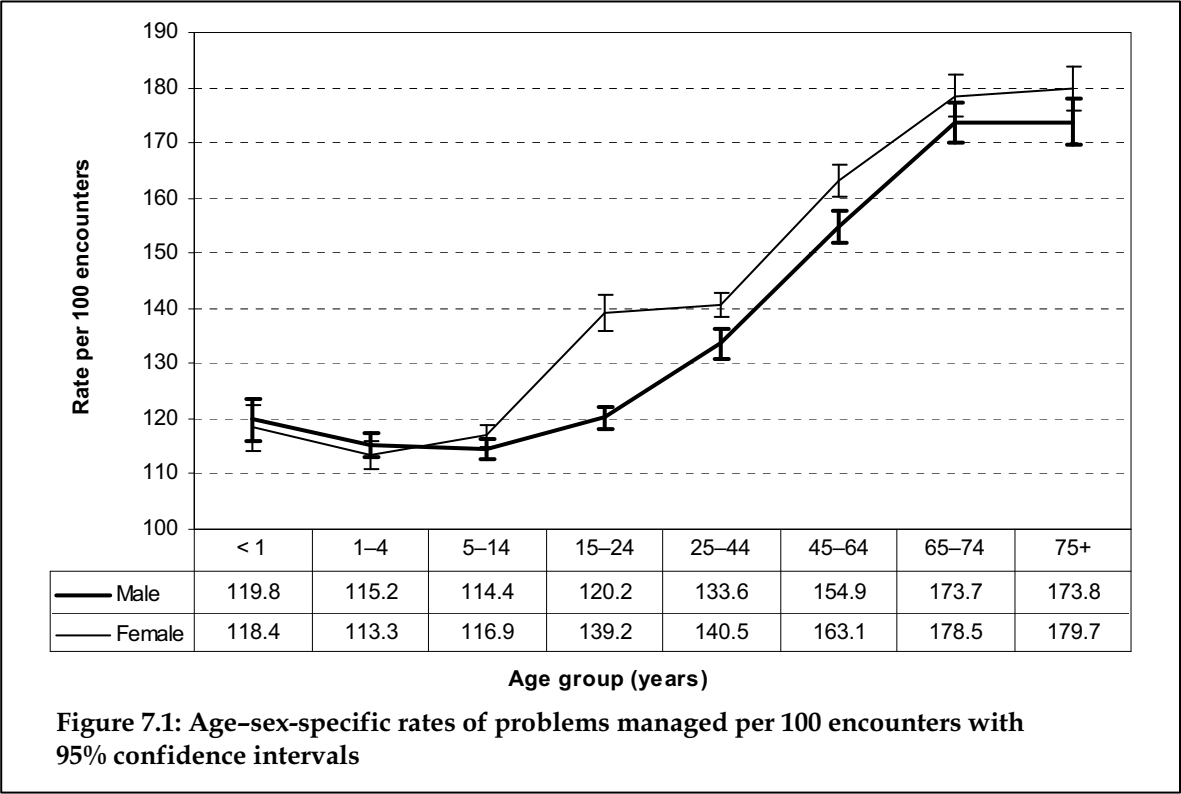
Table 7.1: Number of problems managed at an encounter

Number of problems managed at encounter	Number of encounters	Per cent	95% LCL	95% UCL
One problem	60,418	63.0	61.7	64.3
Two problems	24,400	25.4	24.7	26.2
Three problems	8,458	8.8	8.3	9.3
Four problems	2,622	2.7	2.4	3.0
Total	95,898	100.0	—	—

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

The number of problems managed at encounter increased steadily with the age of the patient. Significantly more problems were managed overall at encounters with female patients (154.4 per 100 encounters, 95% CI: 152.1–156.6) than at those with male patients (147.4 per 100 encounters, 95% CI: 145.2–149.6) (results not tabled).

Figure 7.1 shows the age–sex-specific rates of problems managed, and demonstrates that this difference was particularly evident in the 15–24 year age group.



7.2 Problems managed by ICPC-2 chapter

The frequency and the distribution of problems managed, by ICPC-2 chapter, are presented in Table 7.2. Rates per 100 encounters and the proportion of total problems are provided at the ICPC-2 chapter level and for frequent individual problems within each chapter. Only those individual problems accounting for at least 0.5% of all problems managed are listed in the table, in decreasing order of frequency.

The most common problems managed were:

- those classified to the respiratory system (19.4 per 100 encounters) – in particular upper respiratory tract infection, acute bronchitis and asthma
- problems of a general and unspecified nature (such as immunisations, check-ups and prescriptions)
- cardiovascular problems (such as hypertension and cardiac check-ups)
- musculoskeletal problems (such as arthritis and back complaints)
- skin problems (such as contact dermatitis and solar keratosis/sunburn) (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Distribution of problems managed, by ICPC-2 chapter and most frequent individual problems within chapter

Problem managed	Number	Per cent total problems ^(a) (n = 145,078)	Rate per 100 encounters ^(b) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Respiratory	18,641	12.9	19.4	18.8	20.1
Upper respiratory tract infection	5,943	4.1	6.2	5.7	6.7
Acute bronchitis/bronchiolitis	2,303	1.6	2.4	2.2	2.6
Asthma	2,089	1.4	2.2	2.0	2.3
Immunisation/vaccination—respiratory	1,712	1.2	1.8	1.5	2.1
Sinusitis	1,254	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.4
Tonsillitis*	928	0.6	1.0	0.9	1.1
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	744	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
General & unspecified	17,107	11.8	17.8	17.1	18.5
Immunisation/vaccination—general	2,989	2.1	3.1	2.9	3.3
General check-up*	2,407	1.7	2.5	2.3	2.7
Prescription NOS	1,252	0.9	1.3	1.1	1.5
Results tests/procedures NOS	1,233	0.8	1.3	1.1	1.5
Viral disease, other/NOS	1,168	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.4
Abnormal results/investigations NOS	779	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Administrative procedures NOS	699	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
Cardiovascular	16,860	11.6	17.6	16.8	18.3
Hypertension*	9,496	6.5	9.9	9.4	10.5
Cardiac check-up*	1,141	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.4
Ischaemic heart disease*	1,046	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
Atrial fibrillation/flutter	984	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.1

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued): Distribution of problems managed, by ICPC-2 chapter and most frequent individual problems within chapter

Problem managed	Number	Per cent total problems^(a) (n = 145,078)	Rate per 100 encounters^(b) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Musculoskeletal	16,572	11.4	17.3	16.7	17.8
Arthritis—all*	3,460	4.2	6.3	6.0	6.7
Osteoarthritis*	2,484	1.7	2.6	2.4	2.8
Back complaint*	2,624	1.8	2.7	2.6	2.9
Sprain/strain*	1,509	1.0	1.6	1.4	1.7
Fracture*	959	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.1
Osteoporosis	928	0.6	1.0	0.9	1.1
Injury musculoskeletal NOS	841	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0
Bursitis/tendonitis/synovitis NOS	789	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Skin	16,474	11.4	17.2	16.5	17.9
Contact dermatitis	1,719	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.9
Solar keratosis/sunburn	1,297	0.9	1.4	1.1	1.6
Malignant neoplasm skin	1,145	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.4
Laceration/cut	847	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0
Skin disease, other	768	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Endocrine & metabolic	12,401	8.6	12.9	12.3	13.5
Diabetes, non-gestational*	3,698	2.5	3.9	3.6	4.1
Lipid disorders	3,541	2.4	3.7	3.4	4.0
Vitamin/nutritional deficiency	875	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0
Obesity (BMI > 30)	682	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
Hypothyroidism/myxoedema	670	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
Psychological	11,009	7.6	11.5	10.9	12.0
Depression*	3,822	2.6	4.0	3.8	4.2
Anxiety*	1,691	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.9
Sleep disturbance	1,547	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.7
Digestive	10,282	7.1	10.7	10.4	11.1
Oesophageal disease	2,219	1.5	2.3	2.2	2.5
Gastroenteritis*	1,583	1.1	1.7	1.5	1.8
Female genital system	5,562	3.8	5.8	5.4	6.2
Female genital check-up/pap smear*	1,722	1.2	1.8	1.6	2.0
Menopausal complaint	797	0.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Pregnancy & family planning	3,752	2.6	3.9	3.6	4.2
Pregnancy*	1,279	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.5
Oral contraception*	1,236	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.4
Ear	3,593	2.5	3.8	3.6	3.9
Acute otitis media/myringitis	1,013	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2
Excessive ear wax	719	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.8

(continued)

Table 7.2 (continued): Distribution of problems managed, by ICPC-2 chapter and most frequent individual problems within chapter

Problem managed	Number	Per cent total problems^(a) (n = 145,078)	Rate per 100 encounters^(b) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Neurological	3,434	2.4	3.6	3.4	3.7
Urology	3,002	2.1	3.1	3.0	3.3
Urinary tract infection*	1,525	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.7
Eye	2,464	1.7	2.6	2.4	2.7
Infectious conjunctivitis	683	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
Male genital system	1,698	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.9
Blood	1,559	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.8
Social	668	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.8
Total problems	145,078	100.0	151.3	149.2	153.4

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

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

* Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19>).

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; NOS—not otherwise specified; BMI—body mass index.

7.3 Problems managed by ICPC-2 component

Problems managed in general practice may also be examined using the components of the ICPC-2 classification to provide a more thorough understanding of the types of problems managed during general practice encounters. Table 7.3 lists the distribution of problems managed by ICPC-2 component.

In the BEACH program, participating GPs are instructed to record the problem being managed at the encounter at the highest diagnostic level possible using the currently available evidence. As such, almost two-thirds of problems were expressed as diagnoses or diseases (64.8%), with the majority of other problems described as symptoms or complaints (21.4%), or as diagnostic or preventive procedures such as check-ups (9.4%). However, in some situations, rather than providing clinical details about the problem under management, a ‘process’ was recorded. That is, the problem was described in terms of a test result or an administrative procedure, or as a prescription.

Table 7.3: Distribution of problems managed, by ICPC-2 component

ICPC-2 component	Number	Per cent of total problems (n = 145,078)	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Diagnosis, diseases	94,044	64.8	98.1	96.2	99.9
Symptoms & complaints	30,982	21.4	32.3	31.5	33.1
Diagnostic & preventive procedures	13,594	9.4	14.2	13.5	14.8
Medications, treatments & therapeutics	2,820	1.9	2.9	2.7	3.2
Results	1,679	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.9
Referrals & other RFEs	1,135	0.8	1.2	1.1	1.3
Administrative	823	0.6	0.9	0.8	1.0
Total problems	145,078	100.0	151.3	149.2	153.4

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one problem can be managed at each encounter.

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; RFE—reason for encounter.

7.4 Most frequently managed problems

Overall, there were 151.3 problems managed per 100 encounters. Table 7.4 shows the most frequently managed individual problems in general practice, in decreasing order of frequency. These 30 problems accounted for more than half of all problems managed.

In this analysis, the specific chapter to which ‘across chapter concepts’ (check-ups, immunisation/vaccination and prescriptions) apply is ignored and the concept is grouped with all similar concepts regardless of body system. For example, immunisation/vaccination includes vaccinations for influenza, childhood diseases, and hepatitis.

The far right-hand column in Table 7.4 lists the percentage of each problem that was new to the patient, indicating the first presentation of a problem to a medical practitioner. This can provide a measure of general practice incidence. For example, only 6.7% of all contacts with diabetes were new problems to the patient. In contrast, more than three-quarters of upper respiratory tract infection problems were new to the patient.

The most common problems managed were hypertension (9.9 per 100 encounters), check-ups (6.3 per 100), upper respiratory tract infections (6.2 per 100), immunisation/vaccination (5.2) and depression (4.0) (Table 7.4).

Table 7.4: Most frequently managed problems

Problem managed	Number	Per cent of total problems (n = 145,078)	Rate per 100 encounters^(a) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL	Per cent of new problems^(b)
Hypertension*	9,496	6.5	9.9	9.4	10.5	6.1
Check-up—all*	6,080	4.2	6.3	6.0	6.7	39.0
Upper respiratory tract infection	5,943	4.1	6.2	5.7	6.7	77.0
Immunisation/vaccination—all*	5,015	3.5	5.2	4.8	5.6	53.1
Depression*	3,822	2.6	4.0	3.8	4.2	16.0
Diabetes—all*	3,717	2.6	3.9	3.6	4.1	6.7
Lipid disorders*	3,541	2.4	3.7	3.4	4.0	13.4
Arthritis—all*	3,460	2.4	3.6	3.4	3.8	19.1
Back complaint*	2,624	1.8	2.7	2.6	2.9	24.8
Acute bronchitis/bronchiolitis	2,303	1.6	2.4	2.2	2.6	72.4
Oesophageal disease	2,219	1.5	2.3	2.2	2.5	17.6
Asthma	2,089	1.4	2.2	2.0	2.3	16.7
Prescription—all*	1,880	1.3	2.0	1.7	2.2	5.1
Contact dermatitis	1,719	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.9	45.3
Anxiety*	1,691	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.9	20.4
Test results*	1,679	1.2	1.8	1.6	1.9	29.7
Gastroenteritis*	1,583	1.1	1.7	1.5	1.8	80.8
Sleep disturbance	1,547	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.7	16.0
Urinary tract infection*	1,525	1.1	1.6	1.5	1.7	64.2
Sprain/strain*	1,509	1.0	1.6	1.4	1.7	59.6
Solar keratosis/sunburn	1,297	0.9	1.4	1.1	1.6	47.1
Pregnancy*	1,279	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.5	35.9
Viral disease, other/NOS	1,254	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.4	67.2
Malignant neoplasm skin	1,236	0.9	1.3	1.2	1.4	17.5
Ischaemic heart disease*	1,145	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.4	52.3
Sinusitis acute/chronic	1,141	0.8	1.2	1.0	1.4	12.4
Acute otitis media/myringitis	1,046	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2	8.9
Atrial fibrillation/flutter	1,013	0.7	1.1	1.0	1.2	72.1
Abnormal test results*	984	0.7	1.0	0.9	1.1	6.4
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>73,837</i>	<i>50.9</i>	—	—	—	—
Total problems	145,078	100.0	151.3	149.2	153.4	38.1

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one problem can be recorded at each encounter. Also, only more frequently managed problems are included.

(b) The proportion of problems of this type that were new problems (the first presentation of a problem, including the first presentations of a recurrence of a previously resolved problem, but excluding the presentation of a problem first assessed by another provider).

* Includes multiple ICD-10 or ICD-10 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19>).

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; NOS—not otherwise specified.

7.5 Most common new problems

For each problem managed, participating GPs are asked to indicate whether the problem under management is a new problem for the patient, or a problem that has been managed previously by any medical practitioner. Table 7.5 lists the most common new problems managed in general practice in 2007–08, in decreasing order of frequency. Overall, 55,300 problems (38.1% of all problems) were specified as being new, being managed at a rate of 57.7 per 100 encounters.

The far right-hand column of this table shows the proportion of total contacts with this problem that was reported as being a new problem for the patient. This provides an idea of the incidence of each problem. For example, the 610 new cases of depression represented only 16.0% of all GP contacts with diagnosed depression, suggesting that more than four out of five contacts for depression were for ongoing management. In contrast, four out of five gastroenteritis cases were first consultations to a medical practitioner for this episode of gastroenteritis. The balance (19%) would have been follow-up consultations for this episode of this problem. This indicates that most patients only require one visit to a GP for the management of an episode of gastroenteritis.

The most common new problems managed at general practice encounters were upper respiratory tract infections (4.8 per 100 encounters), immunisations/vaccinations (2.8), acute bronchitis (1.7), gastroenteritis (1.3) and general check-ups (1.2) (Table 7.5).

Table 7.5: Most frequently managed new problems

New problem managed	Number	Per cent of total new problems (n = 55,300)	Rate per 100 encounters^(a) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL	Per cent of this problem^(b)
Upper respiratory tract infection	4,578	8.3	4.8	4.4	5.2	77.0
Immunisation/vaccination—all*	2,661	4.8	2.8	2.5	3.0	53.1
Acute bronchitis/bronchiolitis	1,668	3.0	1.7	1.6	1.9	72.4
Gastroenteritis*	1,278	2.3	1.3	1.2	1.5	80.8
General check-up*	1,168	2.1	1.2	1.1	1.3	48.5
Urinary tract infection*	979	1.8	1.0	0.9	1.1	64.2
Sprain/strain*	899	1.6	0.9	0.8	1.0	59.6
Viral disease, other/NOS	895	1.6	0.9	0.8	1.1	76.6
Sinusitis acute/chronic	843	1.5	0.9	0.8	1.0	67.2
Contact dermatitis	779	1.4	0.8	0.7	0.9	45.3
Acute otitis media/myringitis	731	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.8	72.1
Female genital check-up*	712	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.8	41.4
Tonsillitis*	677	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.8	73.0
Back complaint*	651	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.7	24.8
Solar keratosis/sunburn	611	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.7	47.1
Depression*	610	1.1	0.6	0.6	0.7	16.0
Malignant neoplasm skin	599	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.7	52.3
Hypertension*	578	1.0	0.6	0.5	0.7	6.1
Conjunctivitis, infectious	527	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.6	77.1

(continued)

Table 7.5 (continued): Most frequently managed new problems

New problem managed	Number	Per cent of total new problems (n = 55,300)	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL	Per cent of this problem ^(b)
Test results*	499	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	29.7
Bursitis/tendonitis/synovitis NOS	496	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.6	62.8
Osteoarthritis*	486	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	19.6
Lipid disorders*	476	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6	13.4
Pregnancy*	459	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.5	35.9
Abnormal test results*	450	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.5	46.1
Fracture*	433	0.8	0.5	0.4	0.5	45.2
Excessive ear wax	428	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.5	59.5
Skin disease, other	413	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.5	53.7
Skin injury, other	407	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.5	69.3
Oesophagus disease	391	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.5	17.6
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>26,382</i>	<i>47.7</i>	—	—	—	—
Total new problems	55,300	100.0	57.7	56.3	59.1	—

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one new problem can be recorded at each encounter. Also, only the most frequently managed new problems are included.

(b) The proportion of total contacts with this problem that were accounted for by new problems.

* Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19>).

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; NOS—not otherwise specified.

7.6 Most frequently managed chronic problems

To identify chronic conditions, a chronic condition list classified according to ICPC-2 was applied to the BEACH data set.²⁹ More than a third (34.6%) of the problems managed in general practice were chronic in nature. At least one chronic problem was managed at 39.6% of encounters (95% CI: 38.6–40.7), and chronic problems were managed at an average rate of 52.3 per 100 encounters.

In other parts of this chapter, both chronic and non-chronic conditions (for example, diabetes and gestational diabetes) may have been grouped together when reporting (for example, diabetes – all*, Table 7.4). In this section, only problems regarded as chronic have been included in the analysis. For this reason, the condition labels and figures in this analysis may differ from those in Table 7.4. Where the group used for the chronic analysis differs from that used in other analyses in this report, they are marked with a double asterisk. Codes included in the group may be found in Appendix 5, <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19>.

Table 7.6 shows the most frequently managed chronic problems in Australian general practice in decreasing order of frequency. The top seven chronic problems made up more than half of all chronic problems managed; these were non-gestational hypertension (18.8% of chronic conditions), depressive disorder (7.5%), non-gestational diabetes (7.3%), lipid disorders (7.0%), osteoarthritis (4.9%), oesophageal disease (4.4%) and asthma (4.1%).

Table 7.6: Most frequently managed chronic problems

Chronic problem managed	Number	Per cent of total chronic problems (n = 50,132)	Rate per 100 encounters ^(a) (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL
Hypertension (non-gestational)**	9,486	18.8	9.9	9.3	10.4
Depressive disorder	3,796	7.5	4.0	3.7	4.2
Diabetes (non-gestational)**	3,698	7.3	3.9	3.6	4.1
Lipid disorders*	3,541	7.0	3.7	3.4	4.0
Osteoarthritis*	2,484	4.9	2.6	2.4	2.8
Oesophageal disease	2,219	4.4	2.3	2.2	2.5
Asthma	2,089	4.1	2.2	2.0	2.3
Malignant neoplasm skin	1,145	2.3	1.2	1.0	1.4
Ischaemic heart disease*	1,046	2.1	1.1	1.0	1.2
Atrial fibrillation/flutter	984	2.0	1.0	0.9	1.1
Osteoporosis	928	1.8	1.0	0.9	1.1
Back syndrome with radiating pain	875	1.7	0.9	0.8	1.0
Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	744	1.5	0.8	0.7	0.9
Obesity (BMI > 30)	682	1.4	0.7	0.6	0.8
Hypothyroidism/myxoedema	670	1.3	0.7	0.6	0.8
Migraine	624	1.2	0.7	0.6	0.7
Heart failure	607	1.2	0.6	0.6	0.7
Gout	573	1.1	0.6	0.5	0.7
Arthritis (excluding osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis)**	523	1.0	0.5	0.5	0.6
Schizophrenia	472	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.6
Shoulder syndrome	435	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.5
Rheumatoid arthritis	435	0.9	0.5	0.4	0.5
Anaemia (chronic)**	426	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.5
Dementia	417	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.5
Acne (chronic)**	406	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.5
Anxiety disorder	395	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.5
Overweight	318	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.4
Back syndrome without radiating pain	317	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.4
Vertiginous syndrome	313	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.4
Endocrine/metabolic/nutritional disease other	291	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.4
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>40,939</i>	<i>80.7</i>	—	—	—
Total chronic problems	50,132	100.0	52.3	50.4	54.1

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one chronic problem can be recorded at each encounter. Also, only the most frequently managed chronic problems are included.

* Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19>).

** Indicates that this group differs from that used for analysis in other sections of this chapter, as only chronic conditions have been included in this analysis (see Appendix 5 <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19> for codes included in analysis of chronic conditions).

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; BMI—body mass index.

7.7 Work-related problems managed

The work-related status of a problem under management is determined by the GP, and is defined as any problem that is likely (in the GP's view) to have resulted from work-related activity, workplace exposures or a pre-existing condition that has been significantly exacerbated by work activity or workplace exposure. Work-related problems were managed at a rate of 2.8 per 100 general practice encounters in 2007–08 (Table 7.7).

The most common group of work-related problems were musculoskeletal problems, accounting for almost two-thirds (59.2%) of work-related problems and managed at a rate of 1.7 per 100 general practice encounters. One in ten musculoskeletal problems managed in general practice were work-related. The most common musculoskeletal work-related problems were back complaints (14.6% of work-related problems), sprains and strains (11.3%), musculoskeletal injury (9.0%) and fractures (3.3%).

Work-related psychological problems accounted for 8.3% of total work-related problems and were managed at a rate of 0.2 per 100 encounters. These psychological problems accounted for only 2.1% of total psychological problems managed in general practice. The most commonly managed work-related psychological problems were depression (3.2% of work-related problems) and acute stress reaction (2.1%).

Preventive checks related to the patient's work accounted for 5.7% of work-related problems and were performed at a rate of 0.2 per 100 encounters. The majority of these preventive checks were check-ups classified in the general and unspecified chapter of ICPC-2, including pre-employment and employment check-ups.

Other work-related problems not covered in the above groups accounted for 26.7% of work-related problems and included skin injuries not elsewhere classified (3.6% of work-related problems), lacerations (2.9%) and administrative procedures (2.5%).

Although back complaint was the most commonly managed individual work-related problem (accounting for 14.6% of work-related problems), it accounted for only 15.1% of the management of all back complaints. In contrast, musculoskeletal injury (not otherwise specified) accounted for 9.0% of work-related problems but represented 29.3% of all musculoskeletal injuries (not otherwise specified) managed (Table 7.7).

Table 7.7: Work-related problems, by type and most frequently managed individual problems

Work-related problem managed	Number	Percentage of total work-related problems (n = 2,719)	Rate per 100 encounters (n = 95,898)	95% LCL	95% UCL	Percentage of this problem ^(a)
Musculoskeletal problems	1,611	59.2	1.7	1.5	1.8	9.7
Back complaint*	396	14.6	0.4	0.4	0.5	15.1
Sprain/strain*	307	11.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	20.3
Injury musculoskeletal NOS	246	9.0	0.3	0.2	0.3	29.3
Fracture*	90	3.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	9.4
Shoulder syndrome	80	3.0	0.1	0.1	0.1	18.4
Bursitis/tendonitis/synovitis NOS	66	2.4	0.1	0	0.1	8.4
Acute internal knee damage	55	2.0	0.1	0	0.1	20.1
Tennis elbow	53	2.0	0.1	0	0.1	22.9
Neck symptom/complaint	40	1.5	0.0	0	0.1	12.2
Psychological problems	226	8.3	0.2	0.2	0.3	2.1
Depression*	88	3.2	0.1	0.1	0.1	2.3
Acute stress reaction	57	2.1	0.1	0	0.1	10.1
Preventive checks	156	5.7	0.2	0.1	0.2	1.6
General check-up*	129	4.8	0.1	0.1	0.2	5.4
Other work-related problems	726	26.7	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.7
Injury skin, other	98	3.6	0.1	0.1	0.1	16.7
Laceration/cut	79	2.9	0.1	0.1	0.1	9.3
Administrative procedures NOS	67	2.5	0.1	0.0	0.1	9.6
Total work-related problems	2,719	100.0	2.8	2.6	3.1	—

(a) The proportion of total contacts with this problem that were accounted for by work-related problems.

* Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 4, <www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/subject/19>).

Note: LCL—lower confidence limit; UCL—upper confidence limit; NOS—not otherwise specified. Only the most frequent individual work-related problems accounting for > 1.5% of total work-related problems are reported.