



Better Evaluation and Care of Health (BEACH) is a continuous, national survey of general practice activity in Australia in which 1000 GPs per year take part. It commenced in 1998.

Generation X visits to the GP

Fewer chronic conditions but anxiety and depression high among Gen X patients

Christopher Harrison and Jan Charles
Australian GP Statistics and Classification Centre, University of Sydney

The term Generation X is used regularly in sociology, marketing and popular culture and refers to the generation that came after the post-World War II baby boomers. For this study, Generation X refers to people born between 1965 and 1980.

The BEACH year runs from April to March. According to our definition, Generation X patients were 26–41 years old in 2005–2006. In the 2005–2006 BEACH year, there were 26 098 encounters with Generation X patients, accounting for 26% of all BEACH encounters. Generation X males accounted for significantly fewer encounters (36%) than non-Generation X males (42%). This reflects previous work showing that young males are less likely to see their GP.¹

Generation X had significantly fewer problems managed at an encounter (136 per 100 encounters) than did non-Generation X patients (153), and these were more likely to be new rather than existing problems to the patient (46% compared with 37%). Generation X had a higher management rate of psychological problems, 15 per 100 encounters compared with 11 per 100 for non-Generation X. They were also more likely to have pregnancy or family planning managed (15 per 100 compared with 2 per 100 for non-Generation X). Non-Generation X patients had a far higher rate of circulatory problems managed (20 per 100 encounters, compared with 4 per 100 for Generation X).

When we examined the specific problems managed at encounters we saw that Generation X patients had higher rates of depression, female genital checkups, pregnancy, contraception, pre/post natal checkups, sprains/strains and anxiety. Chronic problems such as hypertension, diabetes, lipid disorders and osteoarthritis were managed at higher rates among non-Generation X patients compared with Generation X patients. Drug abuse was the twelfth most commonly managed problem for Generation X patients but did not appear in the top 60 problems managed for non-Generation X.

Generation X patients had their problems managed with significantly fewer medications (60 per 100 problems managed) than non-Generation X patients (71 per 100). Specifically, they were prescribed far fewer medications (47 per 100 problems) than non-Generation X (58 per 100). This difference is possibly due to the high rates of chronic conditions in non-Generation X patients requiring management with medication. Another factor could be the high rates of immunisation at non-Generation X encounters, where it is the second most common problem managed.

Generation X patients were more likely than non-Generation X patients to have their problems treated with counselling, advice and education. This result is probably associated with the high rates of psychological problems and pregnancy and family planning among Generation X patients, which generally have high rates of such treatments in their management. Generation X patients were more likely than non-Generation X patients to be referred to allied health professionals, particularly to physiotherapists and psychologists

The low rates of chronic problems and the high rates of pregnancy and family planning managed for Generation X patients can be attributed to the age group to which these patients belong. However, the high rates of depression, anxiety and drug abuse are notable. ♦

1. Bayram C, Britt H, Kelly Z, Valenti L. 2003. Male consultations in general practice in Australia 1999-00. AIHW Cat. No. GEP 11. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

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