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Perianal problems

Between January 2008 and December 2009 in the BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) program, perianal problems were managed in general practice at a rate of 0.7 per 100 encounters, about 800 000 times per year nationally. Here we present an overview of perianal problems and discuss haemorrhoids in particular.

Keywords: haemorrhoids; anus diseases; fissure in ano; anus neoplasms



Table 1. Summary of perianal problems

Problem managed	Rate per 100 encounters	Percent of perianal problems (n=1357)
Haemorrhoids	0.29	42.7
Rectal bleeding	0.16	23.7
Anal fissure/perianal abscess	0.13	18.5
Perianal itching	0.05	7.4
Pilonidal cyst/fistula	0.03	5.1

The most common perianal problem managed by general practitioners was haemorrhoids, which accounted for 43% of these problems. Rectal bleeding made up 24% and anal fissure/perianal abscess accounted for 19% (Table 1). The management rate of perianal problems was significantly higher for male patients (0.8 per 100 encounters) than for female patients (0.6). The rate was also significantly higher for patients aged 25–44 years (0.9 per 100 encounters) compared with all other age groups.

Haemorrhoids were managed at a rate of 0.3 per 100 encounters in BEACH, equating to approximately 300 000 GP encounters per year with patients requiring management of haemorrhoids. Children aged less than 15 years and patients aged 65 years and over were significantly less likely to be managed for the condition than patients in the other age groups. There was no difference between male and female patients in the management rates of haemorrhoids.

Medications were prescribed, or advised for over-the-counter purchase, for 54 per 100 haemorrhoid problems managed. The most common medication recorded was local anaesthetic/steroid ointment/suppositories, which made up nearly half of all medications for haemorrhoids. Advice and counselling were provided 30 times per 100 haemorrhoid problems managed, a significantly higher rate than the average at all BEACH encounters, with counselling about diet specified for over one-third of these treatments. Procedural treatments were performed less often than usual. Incisions made up about 40% of these procedures, with an incision performed at three per 100 haemorrhoid problems managed; GPs were much more likely to refer patients to surgeons. A referral to a surgeon was provided for 21 per 100 haemorrhoid problems managed (Figure 1).

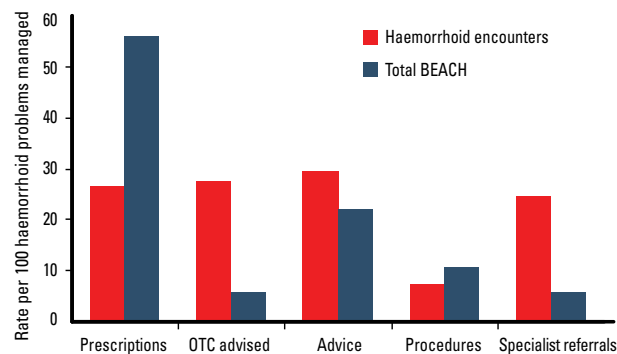


Figure 1. Management of haemorrhoids

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