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The management of chronic problems

The BEACH program (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) shows that between April 2006 and March 2007 at least one chronic problem was managed at 39.7% of general practice encounters.

Figure 1. Age specific rate of chronic problems managed at general practice encounters and encounters where at least one chronic problem was managed

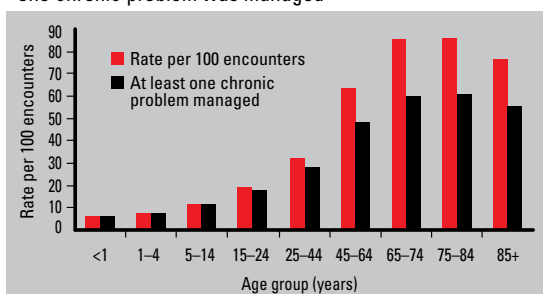


Table 1. Most frequently managed chronic problems

Chronic problem managed	Rate per 100 encounters	Percent of total chronic problems	Total encounters in Australia at which chronic problem was managed
Hypertension (nongestational)	9.5	18.3	9 770 000
Diabetes (nongestational)	3.7	7.1	3 800 000
Depressive disorder	3.7	7.0	3 800 000
Lipid disorders	3.5	6.6	3 600 000
Osteoarthritis	2.6	5.0	2 670 000

■ There were 36 805 encounters where at least one chronic problem was managed in 2006–2007, at a rate of 51.8 chronic problems per 100 encounters. Nationally, this equates to over 40 million general practice encounters at which chronic problems were managed in Australia. For males, at least one chronic problem was managed at 40.7% of encounters. There was no significant difference in the proportion of encounters that involved management of chronic problems between males (40.7%) and females (38.7%).

Chronic problems were managed at a rate of 7.8 per 100 encounters in patients aged 1–4 years, increasing to a rate of 86.2 per 100 encounters in those aged 75–84 years. Management of chronic problems declined in those aged 85 years or more, to a rate of 76.6 per 100 encounters. At encounters where at least one chronic condition was managed, 1.0 chronic problem was managed in patients aged less than 15 years, increasing to 1.4 chronic problems for patients aged 65 years or more (Figure 1).

The most frequently managed chronic problem was nongestational hypertension (9.5 per 100 encounters, accounting for 18.3% of all chronic problems managed). This suggests that there were nearly 10 million general practice contacts in Australia where nongestational hypertension was managed in 2006–2007. Other frequently managed chronic problems included nongestational diabetes and depressive disorder (each managed at a rate of 3.7 per 100 encounters), lipid disorders (3.5 per 100) and osteoarthritis (2.6 per 100) (Table 1).

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