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# Presentations of rash

In the BEACH program (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) between January 2007 and December 2008 there were 4890 encounters where rash was a presenting symptom. Over 90% (n=4714) of these encounters resulted in a skin or general/unspecified problem being managed, which are referred to here as rash encounters, and accounted for 2.5% of the total encounters over the 2 year period.

Table 1. Common diagnoses at encounters with rash as a presenting symptom

Diagnoses	n	Rate per 100 rash encounters (n=4890)
Dermatitis, contact/allergic	1393	28.5
Rash	466	9.5
Dermatophytosis	428	8.8
Urticaria	300	6.1
Solar keratosis/sunburn	243	5.0
Viral exanthema, other	160	3.3
Herpes zoster	145	3.0
Boil/carbuncle	131	2.7
Psoriasis	115	2.4
Allergy/allergic reaction	99	2.0
Adverse effect medical agent	87	1.8
Impetigo	84	1.7
Dermatitis, seborrhoeic	64	1.3
Pityriasis rosea	63	1.3
Dermatitis, atopic eczema	60	1.2
Chickenpox	57	1.2
Skin infection, other	54	1.1

■ **The gender distribution of patients presenting with rash were similar to all BEACH encounters. However, younger patients were more likely to present with rash, with one-quarter (24.5%) of patients being under the age of 15 years compared with 11.8% of all encounters.**

There were 5533 diagnoses/problems managed at rash encounters. Contact/allergic dermatitis was the most common, recorded at a rate of 28.5 per 100 of these encounters. Rash remained undiagnosed at 9.5 per 100 rash encounters, and dermatophytosis and urticaria were common diagnoses (8.8 and 6.1 per 100 rash encounters respectively). Adverse effect of a medical agent was the resulting diagnosis at 1.8 per 100 rash encounters (Table 1).

A medication was prescribed, advised for over-the-counter (OTC) purchase or supplied by the general practitioner at a rate of 82.1 per 100 problems. The OTC medications made up 23.4% of these, GP supplied medications contributed 5.2%, and prescribed medications made up 71.4%. Topical corticosteroids made up over half of all prescribed medications, and of the total medications prescribed/advised for OTC purchase/supplied by the GP, the most common were topical betamethasone (7.4%), mometasone (7.3%) and topical hydrocortisone (6.5%).

A clinical treatment, including advice/education and counselling, was provided at a rate of 20.6 per 100 problems, and a procedural treatment, mainly excision/removal tissue/biopsy/destruction/debridement/cauterisation was provided at a rate of 6.6 per 100 problems.

Referrals to dermatologists were given at a rate of 3.9 per 100 problems, and pathology tests were ordered at a rate of 18.8 per 100 problems.

Conflict of interest: none declared.

### Acknowledgments

The authors thank the GP participants in the BEACH program and all members of the BEACH team. Financial contributors to BEACH between 2007 and 2008: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; National Prescribing Service; AstraZeneca Pty Ltd (Australia); Janssen-Cilag Pty Ltd; Merck, Sharp and Dohme (Australia) Pty Ltd; Pfizer Australia; Abbott Australasia; Sanofi-Aventis Australia Pty Ltd.