

Christopher Harrison
Clare Bayram
Helena Britt

Gestational diabetes

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Several studies have described an increasing prevalence of gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), in line with the known increased prevalence of Type 2 diabetes.¹ The risk of GDM is greater for pregnant women from selected ethnic groups (such as Indigenous,² Asian and Indian³) and for older pregnant women.¹

We sought to investigate whether similar patterns of GDM existed in Australian general practice using the BEACH data. Between April 1998 and March 2013, 14 770 GPs collected information on 419 785 encounters with female patients aged 15–54 years. During this period there were 24 392 pregnancy-related encounters and GDM was managed at 321 of these encounters. The average age of women who had GDM managed was significantly higher (32.8 years, 95% CI: 32.1–33.5) than women at all pregnancy-related encounters (29.3 years, 95% CI: 29.2–29.4).

The management rate of GDM almost doubled between the periods April 1998–March 2003 and April 2008–March 2013, however the rate of pregnancy-related encounters changed little over this period (Table 1). While patients from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB) and English-speaking backgrounds had similar rates of pregnancy-related encounters, NESB patients were twice as likely to have GDM managed. Indigenous patients were almost twice as likely to have a pregnancy-related encounter than non-Indigenous patients. However, Indigenous patients were about four times as likely to have GDM managed than non-Indigenous patients.

This study demonstrates that GDM management has increased over time in Australian general practice. It also shows that patients with GDM were older on average than those at all pregnancy-related encounters

and the management rate of GDM was higher among patients who are NESB or Indigenous.

Authors

Christopher Harrison, Clare Bayram and Helena Britt, Family Medicine Research Centre, University of Sydney, NSW

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correspondence afp@racgp.org.au

Table 1. Pregnancy-related encounters and GDM managed per 100,000 encounters with women aged 15–54 years, April 1998–March 2013 (95% confidence interval)

	Pregnancy-related encounters	GDM encounters	Percentage of pregnancy-related encounters that had GDM managed
April 1998–March 2003	5 378 (5 100–5 657)	5.5 (4.2–6.8)	0.10
April 2003–March 2008	5 369 (5 116–5 622)	7.2 (5.5–8.9)	0.13
April 2008–March 2013	5 535 (5 276–5 794)	10.5 (8.6–12.4)	0.19
Non-English-speaking background	5 515 (5 150–5 880)	15.7 (11.2–20.2)	0.28
English-speaking background	5 463 (5 295–5 631)	7.0 (6.0–8.0)	0.13
Indigenous	9 319 (8 310–10 328)	31.2 (12.9–49.4)	0.33
Non-Indigenous	5 396 (5 237–5 555)	7.3 (6.4–8.2)	0.14
Total	5 425 (5 272–5 578)	7.6 (6.7–8.6)	0.14