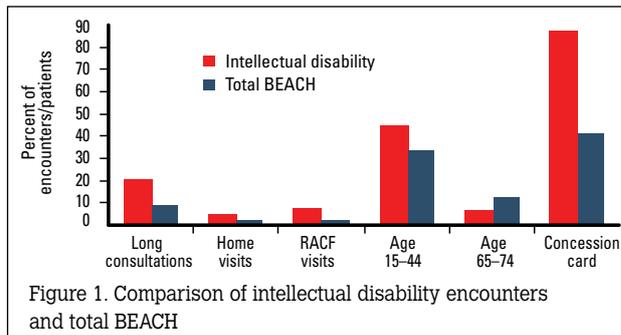


Janice Charles  
Christopher Harrison  
Helena Britt

# Intellectual disability

**Keywords:** disabled persons; general practice



From April 2000 to March 2010 in BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health), intellectual disability was managed at a rate of 5 per 10 000 encounters, suggesting it was managed by general practitioners about 49 000 times per year nationally.

Although intellectual disability is managed relatively infrequently in general practice (compared with problems such as hypertension), an examination of 10 years of BEACH data allows some insight into its management by GPs. Compared with the BEACH average for the same 10 year period, long consultations were significantly more likely to be claimed, and standard consultations were less common than usual. Consultations were also more likely to take place in the patient's home or at a residential aged care facility (RACF). Patients were significantly more likely to be aged 15–44 years and less likely to be aged 65–74 years than patients at total BEACH encounters, and were twice as likely to carry a Commonwealth concession card (Figure 1).

The two most common reasons given by the patients for the consultation were general check up and administrative procedure. At 70% of encounters where intellectual disability was managed, at least one other problem was managed. The most common of these other problems was epilepsy (Table 1). Intellectual disability encounters were twice as likely to have multiple problems managed than average BEACH encounters. The high number of other problems managed at these encounters (115 per 100 encounters) is evidence that GPs appear to be taking a holistic approach to treating patients with intellectual disabilities.

## Management

Medications were prescribed at the low rate of 15 per 100 intellectual disability problems managed, compared with 56 per 100 total problems managed over the same period in BEACH. Of those that were recorded, the most common were: risperidone, an antipsychotic drug; diazepam, a benzodiazepine; and carbamazepine, an antiepileptic medication. Clinical treatments, mainly counselling and/or dealing with

**Table 1. Most common other problems managed at intellectual disability encounters**

Other problem managed	Rate per 100 intellectual disability encounters (n=482)
All other problems	115.4
Epilepsy	10.2
Hypertension	4.6
Depression	4.4
Acute upper respiratory tract infection	4.4
Immunisation	2.5
Schizophrenia	2.5
Constipation	2.3

administrative issues, were recorded at an average rate (30 per 100), while procedures (six per 100) and orders for imaging (three per 100) were recorded less frequently than usual.

## Authors

Janice Charles, Christopher Harrison and Helena Britt, Australian GP Statistics & Classification Centre, University of Sydney, New South Wales.

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correspondence [afp@racgp.org.au](mailto:afp@racgp.org.au)