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Eczema

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From April 2008 to March 2010 in BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health), eczema was managed at a rate of 1.5 per 100 encounters, suggesting that it was managed by general practitioners about 1.8 million times per year nationally.

Terms used by the GPs that were included in this analysis, and referred to here as eczema, were: eczema (49% of all eczema problems recorded), dermatitis (47%), atopic dermatitis (2%), atopic eczema (2%) and infantile eczema (0.3%).

There was no difference between male and female patients in the management rate of eczema. However, the age of the patient did show differences, with younger patients significantly more likely to be managed for this problem.

Figure 1 shows that eczema was managed at a rate of 4.4 per 100 encounters with infants aged less than 1 year, while at encounters with patients aged 45–64 years the rate was 1.1. Eczema was also managed at a significantly higher rate for patients who lived in major cities (1.6 per 100 encounters), than for those from inner and outer regional areas (1.3). The most common reasons given by the patient or their carer for attending the consultation were rash, dermatitis, prescription request and pruritus.

Management

General practitioners prescribed, supplied or advised medications for over-the-counter purchase, at the high rate of 108 per 100 eczema problems managed, compared with the average 70 per 100 problems managed in BEACH (Table 1). Both clinical and procedural treatments were recorded significantly less often for eczema problems than the average for all problems. Referrals, and pathology and imaging orders, were also recorded at much lower than average rates.

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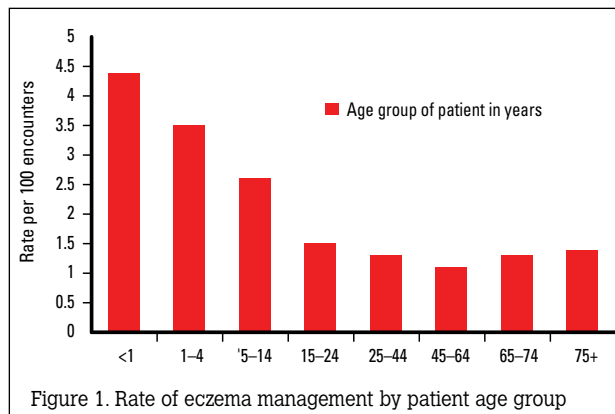


Figure 1. Rate of eczema management by patient age group

Table 1. Medication prescribed, supplied or advised for eczema management

| Medications | Rate per 100 eczema problems managed (n=3057) |
|------------------------------|---|
| All medications | 107.9 |
| Betamethasone topical | 24.8 |
| Mometasone topical | 20.9 |
| Hydrocortisone topical | 16.8 |
| Methylprednisolone aceponate | 13.1 |
| Triamcinolone topical | 7.8 |
| Sorbolene | 3.6 |
| Cephalexin | 2.5 |

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