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Croup

In this analysis we used BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) encounters with children aged 0–14 years from January 2008 to December 2009. Croup was managed 276 times during that period (at 1.2% of 23 016 encounters with children in this age group). This suggests that croup is managed in general practice about 154 000 times per year nationally.

Keywords: child health; emergencies; croup

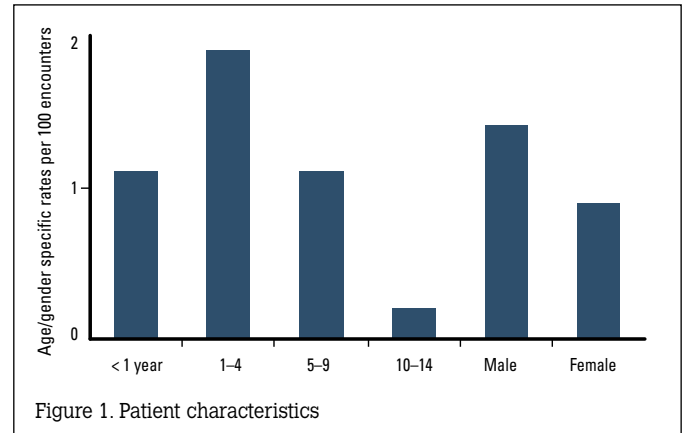


Figure 1. Patient characteristics

Children aged 1–4 years were significantly more likely to be managed for croup than children in other age groups. This was reflected in the age specific rate of 1.9 per 100 encounters for children of that age, compared with a rate of 1.1 per 100 encounters with infants aged less than 1 year and children aged 5–9 years. Rates of croup among those aged 10–14 years were low. Boys were managed for the condition 1.5 times more often than girls, with a rate of 1.4 per 100 encounters for boys and 0.9 for girls (Figure 1).

The most common reasons given by the patient, or their carer, for attending an encounter where croup was managed were cough and croup. Less frequently, fever, breathing problems and/or wheezing were the reasons for the encounter. Croup was managed most often as a new problem, with 68% of croup diagnoses being the first presentation of the problem or the first presentation of a recurrence of the problem for that patient. At most encounters, croup was the only problem managed, although occasionally asthma, otitis media and/or upper respiratory tract infections were also managed.

Management

Medications were prescribed, supplied or advised at the high rate of almost 90 per 100 croup problems managed. Systemic corticosteroids accounted for about 90%, and penicillin made up 4% of these medications.

Clinical treatments were often provided and usually involved advice and counselling about the problem and its treatment. Procedural treatments were rarely recorded, and investigations and referrals were not commonly ordered for croup (Table 1).

Table 1. Treatments recorded at croup encounters

Treatment	Number	Rate per 100 croup problems (n=276)	Percentage of medications/ other treatments for croup
Medications	246	89.1	—
Prednisolone oral	204	73.9	82.9
Amoxicillin	9	3.3	3.7
Paracetamol	9	3.3	3.7
Other treatments	100	36.2	—
Advice/counselling	83	26.2	30.1

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