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# GORD

Between April 2006 and March 2008 in the BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) program, gastro-oesophageal reflux disease was managed by general practitioners at a rate of 2.2 per 100 encounters, which extrapolates to about 2.3 million times per year nationally.

■ **Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) is a growing problem in the Australian population. Between 1998–2000 and 2006–2008, there was a 45% increase in the management rate of GORD in general practice, from 1.5 to 2.2 per 100 encounters. This change was reflected in all age groups (from 15 years) and in both genders. There was also a significant increase of 46% in the rate of new diagnoses of GORD over that period. A number of BEACH substudies examining GORD diagnosed at the current or previous encounter, reported a prevalence of 15–20% among patients attending general practice.**

There was no significant change in the rate of total medications prescribed, advised or supplied for management of GORD between 1998–2000 and 2006–2008, with the majority being acid suppressant agents. There was however, a major shift from H2 receptor antagonists (H2RAs) to proton pump inhibitors (PPIs) (*Figure 1*). The rate of H2RAs decreased from 44 per 100 GORD problems in 1998–2000 to 6.4 in 2006–2008. Proton

pump inhibitors increased from 27 per 100 GORD problems to 77 per 100 over the same period. Proton pump inhibitors have been Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listed for the treatment of oesophagitis due to GORD proven by endoscopy since 1992. In 2001, the requirement for endoscopy was lifted. The cost to the PBS of prescribed PPIs is now over \$400 million per year.

## Overview of GORD 2006–2008

Age specific rates showed that the highest rates of GORD management were for patients aged 65–74 years (3.7 per 100 encounters) and 75+ years (3.1 per 100).

Patients were referred at a rate of 4.5 per 100 GORD problems, half the referral rate for all BEACH encounters (*Figure 2*). The pathology ordering rate was a third of the average, and clinical treatments were also significantly lower. The rate of medications prescribed, supplied or advised was well above the BEACH average, at 95 per 100 GORD problems managed, with PPIs accounting for 87% of these medications. Esomeprazole was the most common medication, prescribed for one-third of all GORD problems managed.<sup>1</sup>

Conflict of interest: none declared.

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## Reference

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Figure 1. Medication rates for GORD 1998–2000 and 2006–2008

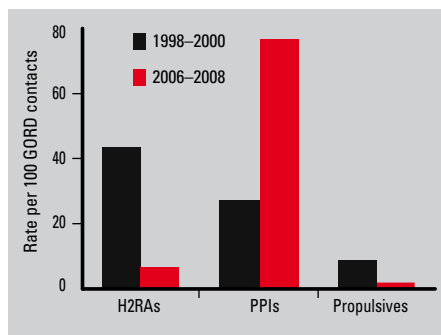


Figure 2. Comparison of management – GORD and total BEACH

