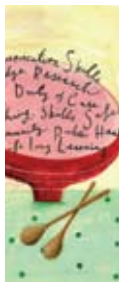


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Multiple chronic problems

■ Between April 2006 and March 2008, general practitioners managed at least one chronic problem at 39.5% of patient encounters, and two or more chronic problems at one in 10 (9.8%) of these encounters. Based on an average 106.5 million Medicare claimed GP encounters per year during the study period, we estimate that about 10.5 million GP encounters in Australia involved two or more chronic problems annually.

There were 188 300 encounters recorded in BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) during the study period. One chronic problem was managed at more than one-quarter (29.7%) of all encounters, two were managed at 7.6% of encounters, and three and four chronic problems were managed at 1.9% and 0.3% of encounters respectively.

The most common combinations of multiple chronic problems managed at the same encounter are listed in Table 1. When two or more chronic problems were managed at the encounter, the most prevalent combination was hypertension plus lipid disorder with or without other chronic problem (1.2% of the total encounters), followed by hypertension plus diabetes with or without other chronic problem (0.9%), and hypertension plus osteoarthritis with or without other chronic problem (0.5%). The most common combination among encounters involving 3–4 chronic problems was hypertension plus diabetes, plus lipid disorders with or without other chronic problem (0.2%).

Conflict of interest: none declared.

Acknowledgments

The authors thank the GP participants in the BEACH program and all members of the BEACH team. Financial contributors to BEACH 2006 to 2008: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare; National Prescribing Service; AstraZeneca Pty Ltd (Australia); Janssen-Cilag Pty Ltd; Merck, Sharp and Dohme (Australia) Pty Ltd; Pfizer Australia; Abbott Australasia; Sanofi-Aventis Australia Pty Ltd.

Table 1. Summary of most common chronic problem combinations

Chronic problems combination at the encounter	Percent (N=188 300)	Annual estimated encounters**
Two or more chronic problems	9.82	10 500 000
Hypertension* + lipid disorders* +/- other chronic problem	1.20	1 300 000
Hypertension* + diabetes* +/- other chronic problem	0.91	1 000 000
Hypertension* + osteoarthritis* +/- other chronic problem	0.45	500 000
Hypertension* + oesophagus disease +/- other chronic problem	0.44	500 000
Diabetes* + lipid disorders* +/- other chronic problem	0.36	400 000
Hypertension* + depression* +/- other chronic problem	0.34	400 000
Hypertension* + ischaemic heart disease* +/- other chronic problem	0.21	200 000
Lipid disorders* + oesophagus disease +/- other chronic problem	0.20	200 000
Hypertension* + osteoporosis +/- other chronic problem	0.19	200 000
Hypertension* + obesity (BMI >30) +/- other chronic problem	0.17	200 000
Hypertension* + asthma +/- other chronic problem	0.16	200 000
Three or more chronic problems	2.23	2 400 000
Hypertension* + diabetes* + lipid disorders* +/- other chronic problem	0.17	200 000

* Includes multiple ICDPC-2 or ICDPC-2 plus codes

** Number of estimated national encounters is rounded to the nearest 100 000

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