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TIA's

Management in general practice

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From April 2005 to March 2010 in the BEACH (Bettering the Evaluation and Care of Health) program, transient ischaemic attack (TIA) was managed in general practice at a rate of 2 per 1000 encounters, about 170 000 times per year nationally.

The management rate of TIA is low on average in general practice, but as would be expected, increases significantly among the older age groups. A rate of five per 1000 encounters with patients aged 75 years or more was recorded, and this extrapolates to GPs managing TIA about 84 000 times per year for patients in this age group. Consequently, patients were more likely than average to be Commonwealth or Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) healthcare card holders and less likely to be new patients at the practice. There was no difference in rate between male and female patients.

The management of TIA differed in some ways from average management of all problems at BEACH encounters. Transient ischaemic attack was less likely to be managed with a clinical treatment such as advice and counselling, or with a procedural treatment, but pathology tests were ordered at a marginally higher than average rate. Imaging tests were ordered frequently, at 32 per 100 TIA contacts, which was more than five times higher than the usual rate of six per 100 total problems managed in BEACH. Details of the tests are shown in *Figure 1*.

Medications prescribed or advised

The pattern of medications recorded for TIA can be seen in *Table 1*. Antithrombotic agents accounted for three-quarters of these medications. Low dose aspirin was prescribed or advised at a rate of 20 per 100 TIA problems managed, and clopidogrel was almost as common, at 19 per 100. Less commonly prescribed antithrombotics were the dipyridamol/aspirin combination, and warfarin. Other medications for TIA included lipid modifying agents and angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors (ACEIs).

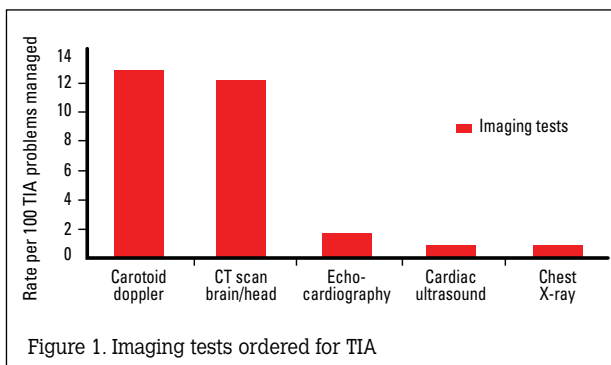


Figure 1. Imaging tests ordered for TIA

Table 1. Medications prescribed or advised for TIA – April 2005 to March 2010

Medications (n=564)	Rate per 100 TIA problems (n=764)	Percent of medications prescribed for TIA
Aspirin (low dose)	20.2	27.3
Clopidogrel	18.7	25.4
Dipyridamole/aspirin	7.7	10.5
Warfarin	4.7	6.4
Aspirin (plain)	4.1	5.5
Atorvastatin	2.8	3.7
Prochlorperazine	2.6	3.4
Perindopril	1.2	1.6

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