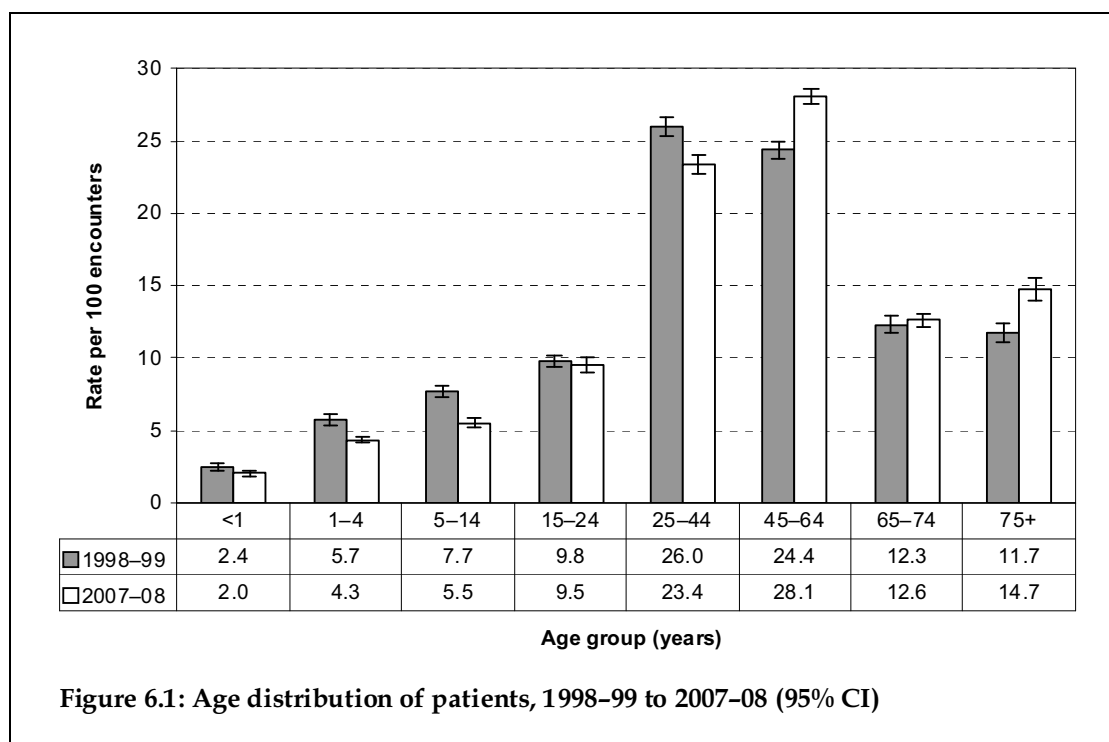# 6   The patients

This chapter includes data about the patients who participated in the BEACH study, including the patient characteristics and reasons for the encounter (RFEs) from each of the 10 years of the BEACH study from 1998–99 to 2007–08. The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2007–08 is indicated for each result in the far right column of the tables: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant linear change, ↑/↓ indicates a marginally significant linear change, § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and — indicates that there was no change.

Significant linear changes can be extrapolated to estimate the national increase or decrease in patient characteristics or RFEs between 1998–99 and 2007–08. An example of an extrapolation is given for each table. The method used to extrapolate to national change estimates is described in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.

6.1   Age–sex distribution of patients at encounter

Figure 6.1 shows the age–sex distribution of patients at BEACH encounters in 1998–99 and 2007–08. Between 1998–99 and 2007–08, the proportion of encounters with patients aged less than 45 years decreased from 51.6% to 44.7%, which equates to approximately 5.1 million fewer encounters nationally. Over the same period, the proportion of encounters with patients aged 45 years and over increased from 48.4% to 55.4%, which equates to an additional 9.6 million encounters. The increasing proportion of the GP workload associated with patients in the 45–64 years and 75 years and older age groups is apparent.

	<1	1–4	5–14	15–24	25–44	45–64	65–74	75+
1998–99	2.4	5.7	7.7	9.8	26.0	24.4	12.3	11.7
2007–08	2.0	4.3	5.5	9.5	23.4	28.1	12.6	14.7

Age group (years)

Figure 6.1: Age distribution of patients, 1998–99 to 2007–08 (95% CI)

Note: CI—confidence interval.

6.2 Other patient characteristics

Table 6.1 shows that the proportion of encounters with patients holding a Repatriation health card has decreased significantly from 3.4% in 1998–99 to 2.8% in 2007–08. The decrease equates to about half a million fewer encounters with repatriation cardholders.

6.3 Patient reasons for encounter

RFEs are those concerns and expectations that patients bring to the GP. International interest in reasons for encounter has been developing over the past three decades. RFEs reflect the patient's demand for care and can provide an indication of service use patterns, which may benefit from intervention on a population level.[20]

Participating GPs were asked to record at least one and up to three patient RFEs in words as close as possible to those used by the patient, before the diagnostic or management process had begun. RFEs can be expressed in terms of one or more symptoms (for example 'itchy eyes', 'chest pain'), in diagnostic terms (for example 'about my diabetes', 'for my hypertension'), a request for a service ('I need more scripts', 'I want a referral'), an expressed fear of disease, or a need for a check-up.

Patient RFEs can have a one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-one and many-to-many relationship to problems managed. That is, the patient may describe a single RFE that relates to a single problem managed at the encounter, one RFE that relates to multiple problems, multiple symptoms that relate to a single problem managed at the encounter, or multiple RFEs that relate to multiple problems managed at the encounter.

Number of reasons for encounter

Table 6.2 shows there has been a decrease in the proportion of patients giving a single RFE, from 63.4% in 1998–99 to 58.9% in 2007–08, equating to a national decrease of about 2 million encounters at which only one RFE was given. To balance this there has been an increase in the proportion of encounters at which two RFEs or three RFEs are recorded, from 26.8% in 1998–99 to 29.1% in 2007–08 for two RFEs, and from 9.7% in 1998–99 to 11.9% in 2007–08 for three RFEs. This suggests that there were 3.6 million more encounters nationally where two RFEs were reported and 2.8 million more encounters nationally where three RFEs were reported in 2007–08 than in 1998–99.

Reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter

Table 6.3 shows that between 1998–99 and 2007–08, there has been:

- a significant increase in the overall rate of RFEs, from 146.3 per 100 encounters in 1998–99 to 153.0 per 100 encounters in 2007–08. This increase equates to about 13.5 million extra RFEs nationally in 2007–08 than in 1998–99

- a 50% increase in the rate of general and unspecified RFEs, equating to an approximate increase of 15.6 million general and unspecified RFEs from 1998–99 to 2007–08 nationally

- a significant decrease in RFEs relating to respiratory problems from 24.8 per 100 encounters in 1998–99 to 20.6 per 100 encounters in 2007–08.

Distribution of reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 component

Table 6.4 shows that between 1998–99 and 2007–08:

- RFEs expressed in terms of a symptom or complaint (for example, 'tired', 'feeling anxious') were the most frequent. The presentation rate of symptoms or complaints has fluctuated over the years. It increased between 1998–99 and 2000–01, and has been decreasing ever since
- the rate of patient attendance to request test results has more than doubled, equating to an increase of over 4.6 million encounters with an RFE of this type in 2007–08 than in 1998–99
- requests for an administrative procedure (such as a medical certificate) also doubled, equating to an increase of approximately 1.4 million requests for an administrative procedure nationally
- patient requests for medications, treatments and therapeutics (such as repeat prescriptions) increased by 50%, equating to an increase of approximately 5.6 million such requests in 2007–08 as compared with 1998–99.

Most frequent patient reasons for encounter

Table 6.5 shows that between 1998–99 and 2007–08:

- the rate at which patients cited a need to get their prescription(s) as an RFE has increased by 50%, equating to an increase of nearly 5 million encounters with this RFE
- the rate of requests for unspecified blood tests as a RFE increased by 70%, equating to over half a million additional encounters with this RFE
- the rate of requests for general advice and education about patient health has increased by over 60%
- the presentation rate of ear pain decreased by one-quarter, equating to 450,000 fewer encounters where ear pain was a reported RFE
- patient presentations about asthma decreased by more than 40%, and the rate of acute bronchitis/bronchiolitis as a RFE halved. And while the rate of upper respiratory tract infection fluctuated over the years it has decreased by about one-quarter since 1998–99. These three decreases combined suggests that there were approximately 1.7 million fewer encounters with any of these RFEs in 2007–08 than in 1998–99, which would partly explain the decrease in the rate of RFEs related to the respiratory system (Table 6.3).

Table 6.1: Characteristics of patients at encounters, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

Patient characteristics	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	↑[a] ↘
Sex (missing n)[b]	(1,474)	(1,182)	(1,111)	(809)	(911)	(932)	(809)	(788)	(765)	(876)	—
Male	42.3 (41.6–43.0)	42.7 (42.0–43.5)	42.9 (42.2–43.6)	42.6 (41.9–43.3)	42.2 (41.4–42.9)	42.6 (41.8–43.3)	43.5 (42.7–44.3)	44.0 (43.2–44.7)	43.7 (42.9–44.5)	42.9 (42.1–43.7)	—
Female	57.7 (57.0–58.4)	57.3 (56.5–58.0)	57.1 (56.4–57.8)	57.4 (56.7–58.1)	57.8 (57.0–58.6)	57.4 (56.7–58.2)	56.5 (55.7–57.3)	56.0 (55.3–56.8)	56.3 (55.5–57.1)	57.1 (56.3–57.9)	—
Age group (missing n)[b]	(1,023)	(804)	(846)	(760)	(895)	(905)	(925)	(769)	(779)	(784)	→
< 1 year	2.4 (2.2–2.6)	2.4 (2.2–2.5)	2.1 (1.9–2.3)	2.0 (1.9–2.1)	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	2.1 (1.9–2.2)	1.8 (1.7–2.0)	2.0 (1.8–2.1)	→
1–4 years	5.7 (5.3–6.0)	5.2 (4.9–5.5)	5.4 (5.1–5.7)	4.9 (4.6–5.2)	5.0 (4.7–5.3)	4.6 (4.3–4.8)	4.3 (4.0–4.7)	4.3 (4.0–4.5)	4.1 (3.9–4.4)	4.3 (4.1–4.6)	→
5–14 years	7.7 (7.3–8.1)	7.2 (6.9–7.5)	6.8 (6.4–7.2)	6.4 (6.1–6.7)	6.6 (6.3–6.9)	5.9 (5.6–6.3)	5.8 (5.5–6.1)	6.0 (5.7–6.3)	5.6 (5.3–5.9)	5.5 (5.2–5.8)	→
15–24 years	9.8 (9.4–10.2)	10.4 (9.9–10.8)	10.3 (9.8–10.7)	9.5 (9.1–10.0)	10.1 (9.7–10.4)	9.6 (9.2–10.1)	9.0 (8.6–9.4)	9.4 (9.0–9.8)	9.1 (8.6–9.5)	9.5 (9.0–9.9)	—
25–44 years	26.0 (25.3–26.7)	26.3 (25.5–27.0)	26.3 (25.6–27.0)	25.8 (25.1–26.5)	25.7 (24.9–26.4)	24.1 (23.4–24.8)	24.4 (23.7–25.1)	23.9 (23.2–24.7)	23.3 (22.6–24.0)	23.4 (22.7–24.1)	→
45–64 years	24.4 (23.8–25.0)	24.5 (24.0–25.0)	26.1 (25.5–26.7)	26.3 (25.7–26.8)	26.5 (25.9–27.0)	27.2 (26.7–27.7)	28.0 (27.4–28.6)	27.6 (27.0–28.2)	28.2 (27.6–28.7)	28.1 (27.5–28.6)	←
65–74 years	12.3 (11.7–12.8)	12.0 (11.5–12.5)	11.7 (11.2–12.2)	12.3 (11.8–12.8)	11.6 (11.1–12.0)	12.4 (11.9–12.9)	12.6 (12.1–13.2)	12.2 (11.7–12.6)	12.7 (12.2–13.2)	12.6 (12.1–13.1)	—
75+ years	11.7 (11.1–12.4)	12.1 (11.4–12.9)	11.3 (10.7–12.0)	12.8 (12.0–13.5)	12.7 (11.9–13.4)	14.4 (13.6–15.2)	13.9 (13.1–14.7)	14.6 (13.7–15.4)	15.2 (14.4–16.0)	14.7 (13.9–15.5)	←

Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)

(continued)

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Table 6.1 (continued): Characteristics of patients at encounters, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

Patient characteristics	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)										
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	↑/→ [a]
Other characteristics [c]											
New patient to practice	9.1 (8.5–9.7)	7.3 (6.7–7.9)	8.0 (7.2–8.7)	8.9 (8.2–9.5)	9.7 (8.9–10.5)	9.1 (8.4–9.8)	8.9 (8.1–9.6)	8.9 (8.2–9.7)	8.4 (7.7–9.2)	8.6 (7.8–9.4)	—
Commonwealth concession card	43.1 (41.7–44.5)	38.6 (37.0–40.2)	36.7 (35.1–38.3)	41.9 (40.4–43.3)	40.4 (38.8–41.9)	42.5 (41.0–44.0)	43.2 (41.8–44.7)	42.1 (40.6–43.7)	41.5 (39.9–43.0)	41.8 (40.3–43.3)	§
Repatriation health card [d]	3.4 (3.1–3.6)	2.9 (2.6–3.1)	3.1 (2.9–3.4)	3.3 (3.0–3.5)	3.3 (3.0–3.6)	3.5 (3.2–3.8)	3.2 (2.9–3.4)	3.1 (2.8–3.3)	3.1 (2.8–3.3)	2.8 (2.5–3.0)	↓
Non-English-speaking background	14.5 (12.9–16.0)	8.0 (6.5–9.5)	8.0 (7.2–8.7)	9.3 (7.6–11.0)	10.6 (9.0–12.2)	9.7 (7.8–11.6)	10.8 (9.0–12.6)	9.8 (8.2–11.4)	7.1 (5.8–8.5)	9.9 (8.2–11.5)	§
Aboriginal person and/or Torres Strait Islander	1.2 (0.9–1.5)	0.7 (0.5–0.9)	0.8 (0.5–1.1)	1.0 (0.8–1.3)	1.0 (0.8–1.3)	1.6 (1.2–2.0)	1.3 (1.0–1.7)	0.9 (0.6–1.1)	0.9 (0.6–1.2)	0.9 (0.7–1.2)	§

(a) The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2007–08 is indicated for each result: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant or marginal change, § indicates a non-linear significant change, and — indicates there was no change.

(b) Missing data removed.

(c) Missing data for each of the listed 'other' patient characteristics were counted as a 'no' response.

(d) The 1998–99 and 1999–00 results published here include patients who held either a gold or white Repatriation health card; some previously published figures only included patients who held the gold card.

Note: CI—confidence interval.

Table 6.2: Number of patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

Number of reasons for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters (95% CI)										↑(a)↓
	1998–99	1999–00	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	
	(n = 96,901)	(n = 104,856)	(n = 99,307)	(n = 96,973)	(n = 100,987)	(n = 98,877)	(n = 94,386)	(n = 101,993)	(n = 91,805)	(n = 95,898)	
One RFE	63.4 (62.3–64.6)	62.0 (60.8–63.1)	60.4 (59.2–61.6)	61.8 (60.6–63.0)	60.7 (59.5–61.9)	61.0 (59.9–62.2)	61.4 (60.2–62.6)	60.9 (59.7–62.2)	60.6 (59.4–61.9)	58.9 (57.7–60.2)	→
Two RFEs	26.8 (26.1–27.5)	27.5 (26.9–28.2)	28.2 (27.6–28.9)	27.2 (26.5–28.0)	27.8 (27.1–28.4)	27.7 (27.0–28.4)	27.6 (26.9–28.3)	27.8 (27.1–28.5)	27.9 (27.2–28.7)	29.1 (28.5–29.8)	↑
Three RFEs	9.7 (9.2–10.4)	10.5 (9.8–11.1)	11.4 (10.7–12.1)	11.0 (10.3–11.6)	11.6 (10.8–12.3)	11.3 (10.5–12.0)	11.0 (10.3–11.7)	11.2 (10.5–11.9)	11.4 (10.7–12.2)	11.9 (11.2–12.6)	↑

(a) The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2007–08 is indicated for each result: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change.

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFEs—reasons for encounter.

Table 6.3: Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

ICPC-2 Chapter	Rate per 100 encounters(a) (95% CI)										↑(b)↓
	1998–99	1999–00	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	2004–05	2005–06	2006–07	2007–08	
	(n = 96,901)	(n = 104,856)	(n = 99,307)	(n = 96,973)	(n = 100,987)	(n = 98,877)	(n = 94,386)	(n = 101,993)	(n = 91,805)	(n = 95,898)	
General & unspecified	26.6 (25.7–27.4)	29.0 (28.1–29.9)	28.3 (27.5–29.1)	30.9 (29.9–31.8)	34.6 (33.6–35.6)	36.2 (35.2–37.2)	36.5 (35.5–37.6)	36.3 (35.2–37.4)	37.7 (36.7–38.8)	40.1 (39.0–41.2)	↑
Respiratory	24.8 (24.0–25.6)	25.3 (24.3–26.2)	24.6 (23.7–25.4)	23.4 (22.6–24.2)	23.0 (22.0–24.0)	21.4 (20.6–22.2)	20.6 (19.8–21.4)	21.9 (21.1–22.7)	20.7 (19.9–21.6)	20.6 (19.7–21.5)	→
Musculoskeletal	16.7 (16.1–17.4)	16.6 (16.1–17.1)	17.7 (17.1–18.2)	16.7 (16.1–17.3)	17.7 (17.2–18.3)	16.3 (15.7–16.9)	16.7 (16.0–17.3)	16.4 (15.8–16.9)	16.1 (15.6–16.6)	15.4 (14.9–15.9)	→
Skin	15.1 (14.6–15.5)	15.1 (14.7–15.6)	15.5 (15.0–16.0)	14.4 (13.9–14.9)	14.7 (14.3–15.2)	15.1 (14.5–15.7)	15.6 (15.0–16.2)	15.0 (14.5–15.6)	15.7 (15.1–16.3)	15.4 (14.8–16.1)	—
Cardiovascular	11.4 (10.9–12.0)	11.2 (10.6–11.8)	11.7 (11.1–12.2)	11.4 (10.8–11.9)	10.6 (10.0–11.1)	10.7 (10.1–11.2)	10.5 (10.0–11.0)	10.8 (10.2–11.3)	11.2 (10.7–11.8)	11.2 (10.6–11.8)	—
Digestive	10.6 (10.3–10.9)	10.4 (10.0–10.7)	11.1 (10.7–11.5)	10.6 (10.2–11.0)	10.4 (10.0–10.8)	10.7 (10.3–11.2)	9.9 (9.5–10.3)	9.9 (9.5–10.3)	10.1 (9.7–10.5)	10.3 (10.0–10.7)	—

(continued)

Table 6.3 (continued): Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 chapter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

ICPC-2 Chapter	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	(b)
					Rate per 100 encounters(a) (95% CI)						
Psychological	7.6 (7.2–8.0)	7.2 (6.8–7.6)	8.1 (7.7–8.6)	7.8 (7.3–8.3)	7.3 (6.9–7.8)	7.3 (6.9–7.7)	7.6 (7.2–8.0)	7.8 (7.3–8.3)	7.5 (7.1–7.8)	7.8 (7.5–8.2)	→
Endocrine & metabolic	5.6 (5.3–5.9)	5.4 (5.1–5.7)	6.2 (5.9–6.5)	6.4 (6.1–6.7)	6.0 (5.7–6.3)	6.2 (5.8–6.5)	6.2 (5.8–6.5)	6.2 (5.8–6.5)	6.4 (6.1–6.8)	6.5 (6.1–6.8)	←
Female genital system	5.3 (5.0–5.7)	5.3 (4.9–5.7)	5.5 (5.1–5.9)	5.5 (5.1–5.9)	6.1 (5.7–6.6)	5.1 (4.8–5.5)	5.0 (4.6–5.4)	5.1 (4.8–5.5)	5.1 (4.7–5.4)	5.2 (4.8–5.6)	—
Neurological	5.3 (5.1–5.5)	5.6 (5.4–5.8)	5.8 (5.5–6.0)	5.4 (5.2–5.6)	5.7 (5.5–6.0)	5.3 (5.1–5.6)	5.1 (4.9–5.4)	4.9 (4.7–5.2)	4.9 (4.7–5.2)	4.8 (4.6–5.0)	→
Ear	4.5 (4.3–4.7)	4.2 (4.0–4.4)	4.2 (4.0–4.3)	4.2 (4.0–4.4)	4.0 (3.8–4.1)	3.7 (3.6–3.9)	3.9 (3.7–4.1)	3.9 (3.7–4.1)	3.6 (3.4–3.7)	3.6 (3.4–3.8)	→
Pregnancy & family planning	3.4 (3.4–4.0)	3.8 (3.5–4.2)	3.5 (3.2–3.8)	3.5 (3.2–3.8)	3.6 (3.3–3.9)	3.7 (3.4–4.0)	3.4 (3.1–3.7)	3.4 (3.1–3.6)	3.3 (3.0–3.6)	3.2 (3.0–3.5)	—
Urology	2.5 (2.3–2.6)	2.6 (2.5–2.8)	2.4 (2.3–2.6)	2.5 (2.4–2.7)	2.5 (2.3–2.6)	2.5 (2.4–2.7)	2.5 (2.4–2.7)	2.6 (2.5–2.8)	2.6 (2.4–2.7)	2.5 (2.4–2.7)	—
Eye	2.7 (2.7–3.0)	2.8 (2.7–3.0)	2.7 (2.5–2.8)	2.5 (2.4–2.7)	2.7 (2.6–2.9)	2.7 (2.6–2.9)	2.7 (2.6–2.9)	2.8 (2.6–2.9)	2.5 (2.4–2.7)	2.5 (2.4–2.6)	—
Blood	1.8 (1.6–2.0)	2.1 (1.9–2.3)	2.0 (1.8–2.2)	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	1.0 (0.8–1.2)	1.3 (1.1–1.4)	1.2 (1.0–1.5)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	→
Male genital system	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.3)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.2)	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	—
Social problems	0.9 (0.7–1.1)	1.0 (0.8–1.1)	0.9 (0.7–1.1)	1.0 (0.8–1.1)	1.0 (0.8–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.1)	1.0 (0.8–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—
Total RFEs	146.3 (144.6–148.0)	148.5 (146.7–150.2)	151.0 (149.2–152.8)	149.2 (147.4–150.9)	150.9 (149.0–152.7)	150.2 (148.4–152.0)	149.6 (147.8–151.5)	150.3 (148.4–152.2)	150.8 (148.9–152.7)	153.0 (151.1–154.8)	←

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one RFE can be recorded for each encounter.

(b) The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2007–08 is indicated for each result: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change, and — indicates there was no change.

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFE—reason for encounter.

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Table 6.4: Rate of patient reasons for encounter by ICPC-2 component, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

	Rate per 100 encounters[a] (95% CI)										[b]
ICPC component	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	← →
Symptoms & complaints	71.1 (69.4–72.9)	73.4 (71.5–75.3)	76.6 (74.6–78.6)	74.1 (72.3–75.9)	74.0 (72.0–76.1)	71.7 (69.8–73.5)	71.3 (69.4–73.2)	69.7 (67.9–71.5)	67.9 (66.1–69.8)	67.7 (65.8–69.6)	§
Diagnosis, diseases	33.6 (31.9–35.2)	27.7 (26.2–29.2)	29.0 (27.6–30.5)	27.3 (25.9–28.7)	26.0 (24.6–27.4)	25.1 (23.9–26.4)	24.5 (23.3–25.7)	26.8 (25.4–28.2)	27.9 (26.2–29.5)	27.8 (26.3–29.3)	§
Diagnostic & preventive procedures	22.4 (21.5–23.3)	22.9 (22.0–23.8)	22.3 (21.4–23.2)	22.7 (21.7–23.6)	23.8 (22.8–24.7)	24.0 (23.1–25.0)	23.4 (22.5–24.3)	24.4 (23.4–25.3)	24.8 (23.8–25.7)	25.6 (24.7–26.5)	←
Medications, treatments & therapeutics	10.3 (9.8–10.9)	12.0 (11.4–12.6)	11.2 (10.6–11.8)	11.9 (11.3–12.4)	13.0 (12.4–13.6)	14.4 (13.7–15.1)	14.5 (13.8–15.3)	14.4 (13.7–15.1)	14.2 (13.5–14.8)	15.1 (14.3–15.8)	←
Referral & other RFEs	4.4 (4.0–4.7)	7.2 (6.7–7.7)	6.5 (6.0–7.0)	7.2 (6.7–7.7)	7.0 (6.6–7.5)	7.2 (6.8–7.6)	7.4 (6.9–7.9)	6.9 (6.5–7.4)	7.3 (6.9–7.8)	6.8 (6.4–7.2)	←
Results	3.4 (3.1–3.7)	4.0 (3.7–4.3)	4.2 (3.9–4.6)	4.7 (4.4–5.1)	5.4 (5.0–5.7)	6.0 (5.6–6.4)	6.8 (6.4–7.2)	6.5 (6.1–6.9)	6.9 (6.5–7.3)	7.6 (7.2–8.1)	←
Administrative	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	1.3 (1.1–1.4)	1.1 (0.9–1.3)	1.3 (1.1–1.5)	1.6 (1.4–1.8)	1.8 (1.6–1.9)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.9 (1.7–2.0)	2.4 (2.2–2.5)	←
Total RFEs	146.3 (144.6–148.0)	148.5 (146.7–150.2)	151.0 (149.2–152.8)	149.2 (147.4–150.9)	150.9 (149.0–152.7)	150.2 (148.4–152.0)	149.6 (147.8–151.5)	150.3 (148.4–152.2)	150.8 (148.9–152.7)	153.0 (151.1–154.8)	←

(a) Figures do not total 100, as more than one RFE can be recorded for each encounter.

(b) The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2007–08 is indicated for each result: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, and § indicates a non-linear significant or marginal change.

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFE—reason for encounter.

Table 6.5: Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters[a] (95% CI)										[b]
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	
Check-up—all*	13.6 (13.0–14.3)	14.2 (13.5–14.9)	13.2 (12.5–13.9)	13.4 (12.7–14.0)	13.6 (12.9–14.2)	14.1 (13.4–14.8)	13.4 (12.8–14.0)	14.1 (13.4–14.8)	14.6 (13.9–15.2)	14.5 (13.8–15.1)	—
Prescription—all*	8.2 (7.7–8.7)	9.6 (9.1–10.2)	9.2 (8.7–9.8)	9.8 (9.2–10.3)	10.8 (10.2–11.3)	12.1 (11.5–12.7)	12.2 (11.5–12.8)	12.1 (11.4–12.7)	11.8 (11.2–12.4)	12.5 (11.9–13.2)	←
Test results*	3.4 (3.1–3.7)	4.0 (3.7–4.2)	4.3 (3.9–4.6)	4.7 (4.4–5.0)	5.4 (5.0–5.7)	6.0 (5.7–6.4)	6.8 (6.4–7.2)	6.5 (6.1–6.9)	6.9 (6.5–7.3)	7.6 (7.2–8.1)	←
Cough	6.2 (5.8–6.6)	7.0 (6.5–7.4)	7.0 (6.5–7.4)	6.5 (6.1–6.9)	6.7 (6.3–7.2)	6.2 (5.8–6.6)	5.9 (5.5–6.2)	6.4 (6.0–6.8)	5.8 (5.4–6.2)	6.2 (5.8–6.7)	§
Immunisation/vaccination—all*	4.9 (4.5–5.3)	4.2 (3.9–4.6)	4.4 (4.0–4.8)	4.6 (4.2–5.0)	4.7 (4.3–5.1)	4.4 (4.0–4.9)	4.3 (3.9–4.8)	4.8 (4.4–5.2)	4.3 (3.9–4.7)	4.8 (4.4–5.1)	§
Throat complaint	3.8 (3.5–4.1)	4.2 (3.8–4.5)	4.0 (3.7–4.3)	3.8 (3.5–4.0)	3.8 (3.5–4.1)	3.4 (3.1–3.6)	3.5 (3.3–3.8)	3.3 (3.0–3.5)	3.3 (3.1–3.6)	3.3 (3.0–3.6)	§
Back complaint*	3.6 (3.3–3.8)	3.6 (3.4–3.8)	3.8 (3.5–4.0)	3.8 (3.6–4.1)	3.5 (3.3–3.8)	3.5 (3.2–3.7)	3.4 (3.2–3.6)	3.5 (3.2–3.7)	3.2 (3.0–3.4)	3.2 (3.0–3.4)	§
Rash*	2.6 (2.4–2.8)	2.7 (2.6–2.9)	2.9 (2.8–3.1)	2.8 (2.6–3.0)	2.8 (2.7–3.0)	2.8 (2.6–2.9)	2.9 (2.7–3.1)	2.6 (2.5–2.8)	2.8 (2.6–3.0)	2.5 (2.3–2.6)	—
Upper respiratory tract infection	2.9 (2.6–3.2)	2.7 (2.4–3.0)	2.6 (2.3–2.9)	2.3 (2.1–2.6)	2.2 (1.9–2.4)	1.9 (1.7–2.1)	1.8 (1.5–2.0)	2.4 (2.0–2.7)	2.4 (2.1–2.7)	2.2 (2.0–2.5)	§
Fever	1.8 (1.6–2.0)	2.2 (1.9–2.5)	2.3 (2.0–2.5)	2.0 (1.8–2.2)	2.2 (1.9–2.5)	1.9 (1.7–2.1)	1.8 (1.6–2.0)	2.2 (1.9–2.5)	1.8 (1.6–2.0)	2.1 (1.8–2.5)	—
Hypertension/high blood pressure*	2.5 (2.2–2.8)	1.7 (1.4–1.9)	2.2 (1.9–2.4)	2.1 (1.8–2.3)	1.8 (1.6–2.0)	1.9 (1.6–2.1)	1.7 (1.5–1.9)	1.9 (1.6–2.1)	2.1 (1.8–2.5)	2.1 (1.8–2.3)	—
Depression*	2.1 (2.0–2.3)	1.7 (1.6–1.8)	2.1 (2.0–2.3)	1.9 (1.8–2.0)	1.9 (1.7–2.0)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.9 (1.7–2.0)	1.9 (1.7–2.0)	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	2.0 (1.9–2.2)	—
Administrative procedure NOS	0.8 (0.8–0.9)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.4 (1.3–1.6)	1.5 (1.4–1.7)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.6)	1.6 (1.5–1.8)	2.0 (1.8–2.1)	←
Abdominal pain*	2.2 (2.1–2.4)	2.1 (1.9–2.2)	2.3 (2.1–2.4)	2.1 (2.0–2.2)	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	2.0 (1.9–2.2)	1.9 (1.8–2.0)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.8 (1.6–1.9)	→

(continued)

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Table 6.5 (continued): Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters[a] (95% CI)										↑↓[b]
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	
Headache	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	2.2 (2.0–2.3)	2.2 (2.0–2.3)	2.0 (1.9–2.2)	2.1 (1.9–2.3)	1.8 (1.6–1.9)	1.7 (1.6–1.8)	1.7 (1.6–1.8)	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	1.6 (1.5–1.8)	→
Diarrhoea	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	1.5 (1.3–1.6)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.6)	—
Skin complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.3 (1.1–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.5)	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	1.5 (1.3–1.6)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	←
Nasal congestion/sneezing	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	1.7 (1.4–1.9)	1.6 (1.4–1.8)	1.5 (1.3–1.7)	1.7 (1.4–2.0)	1.3 (1.1–1.5)	1.4 (1.2–1.6)	1.3 (1.1–1.6)	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	1.4 (1.2–1.6)	§
Ear pain	1.9 (1.8–2.1)	1.9 (1.7–2.0)	1.8 (1.7–1.9)	1.7 (1.6–1.9)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	1.6 (1.5–1.7)	1.6 (1.5–1.7)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	→
Weakness/tiredness	1.6 (1.4–1.7)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.5 (1.3–1.6)	1.5 (1.4–1.6)	1.7 (1.5–1.8)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	1.4 (1.2–1.5)	—
Knee complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	—
Diabetes—all*	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	1.0 (0.8–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.3 (1.1–1.4)	§
Blood test NOS	0.7 (0.6–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	←
Vertigo/dizziness	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.1–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—
Foot/toe complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—
Anxiety*	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—
Vomiting	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.3)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—
Swelling*	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.1)	1.1 (0.9–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.1)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	—

(continued)

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Table 6.5 (continued): Most frequent patient reasons for encounter, summary of annual results, BEACH, 1998–99 to 2007–08

Patient reason for encounter	Rate per 100 encounters[a] (95% CI)										[b]
	1998–99 (n = 96,901)	1999–00 (n = 104,856)	2000–01 (n = 99,307)	2001–02 (n = 96,973)	2002–03 (n = 100,987)	2003–04 (n = 98,877)	2004–05 (n = 94,386)	2005–06 (n = 101,993)	2006–07 (n = 91,805)	2007–08 (n = 95,898)	
Chest pain NOS	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.1)	→
Shoulder complaint	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (1.0–1.1)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.3 (1.1–1.4)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	—
Advice/education	0.6 (0.5–0.7)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.6 (0.6–0.7)	0.6 (0.6–0.7)	0.7 (0.7–0.8)	0.8 (0.7–1.0)	0.7 (0.7–0.8)	0.8 (0.8–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	←
Sleep disturbance	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.3 (1.2–1.4)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.4)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	—
Neck complaint	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	0.9 (0.9–1.0)	1.0 (0.9–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–0.9)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	→
Leg/thigh complaint	1.0 (1.0–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.0)	1.2 (1.1–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.0 (1.0–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	—
Asthma	1.4 (1.3–1.5)	1.2 (1.0–1.3)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (1.0–1.2)	1.1 (0.9–1.2)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.8 (0.7–0.8)	→
Oral contraception*	0.9 (0.8–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.9 (0.8–1.0)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.8 (0.7–0.9)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	→
Acute bronchitis/bronchiolitis	1.0 (0.9–1.1)	0.7 (0.6–0.8)	0.6 (0.5–0.7)	0.6 (0.5–0.7)	0.5 (0.4–0.6)	0.5 (0.4–0.6)	0.5 (0.4–0.6)	0.6 (0.5–0.7)	0.5 (0.4–0.5)	0.5 (0.5–0.6)	→
Total RFEs	146.3 (144.6–148.0)	148.5 (146.7–150.2)	151.0 (149.2–152.8)	149.2 (147.4–150.9)	150.9 (149.0–152.7)	150.2 (148.4–152.0)	149.6 (147.8–151.5)	150.3 (148.4–152.2)	150.8 (148.9–152.7)	153.0 (151.1–154.8)	←

(a)   Figures do not total 100, as more than one RFE can be recorded for each encounter.

(b)   The direction and type of change from 1998–99 to 2007–08 is indicated for each result: ↑/↓ indicates a statistically significant change, ↗/↘ indicates a marginal change, § indicates a non-linear significant change, and — indicates there was no change.

*   Includes multiple ICPC-2 or ICPC-2 PLUS codes (see Appendix 5).

Note: CI—confidence interval; RFE—reason for encounter; NOS—not otherwise specified.