

## **SAND abstract No. 16 from the BEACH program 2000–2001**

### **Subject: Effect of day and time of GP visit on billing method**

**Organisation supporting this study:** Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (General Practice Branch).

**Issues:** This sub-study investigated the effect of day and/or time of the GP–patient consultation on billing method (bulk billed v's patient billed).

**Sample:** 5,201 Medicare claimable encounters from 196 GPs; data collection period: 6/6/00 – 10/7/00 and 19/9/00 – 23/10/00.

**Method:** See 'SAND Method' on this web site (<http://www.fmrc.org.au/beach.htm>).

### **Summary of results**

For the 5,201 Medicare claimable encounters, three quarters (74.3%) were bulk billed and the remainder (25.6%) were patient billed.

Patients aged 65 years and over were bulk-billed significantly more often than younger patients. The difference was most striking when comparing the 45–64 with the 75+ age group, who were bulk billed at 68.1% (95% CI 63.1-73.0) and 86.7% (95% CI: 83.0-90.5) of Medicare-claimable encounters respectively.

The billing method (bulk or patient billed) was related to the day of the encounter ( $X^2_6=41.5$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Encounters on Saturday ( $n=248$ ) were significantly more likely to be bulk billed (84.7%) than encounters on Tuesday ( $n=1,413$ , 69.9% bulk billed). More generally, the billing method and whether the encounter was during the week or on the weekend were significantly related ( $X^2_1=15.0$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Weekend consultations ( $n=274$ ) were more likely to be bulk billed (84.3%) than weekday consultations ( $n=4,927$ , 73.8% bulk billed).

Most encounters on any day (55.4%) were during the 8am-1pm ('morning') session, 38.3% were during the 1pm-6pm ('afternoon') session, and 6.4% were 'over-night' (6pm-8am). Billing method was significantly related to time of consultation ( $X^2_2=9.0$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). If an encounter was during the 'afternoon' session, it was significantly less likely to be bulk billed (72.2%) than if it was 'over-night' (77.3% bulk billed).

Billing method was significantly related to the combination of day (weekday or weekend) and time (morning, afternoon or over-night) of the encounter ( $X^2_5=26.7$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Weekend morning sessions ( $n=227$ ) were significantly more likely to be bulk billed (87.2%), than weekend afternoon sessions ( $n=32$ , 71.9% bulk billed) and weekend over-night sessions ( $n=14$ , 71.4% bulk billed).

Weekend morning encounters ( $n=227$ ) had the highest bulk billing rate (87.2%), followed by weekday over-night encounters ( $n=316$ , 77.5% bulk billed). The lowest bulk billing rates were on weekend afternoon ( $n=32$ , 71.8%) and weekend over-night encounters ( $n=14$ , 71.4%).

Further analysis on 'after-hours' encounters is being undertaken.

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