SAND abstract number 217 from the BEACH program 2013–14

Subject: Practice based continuity of care

Organisation collaborating for this study: Family Medicine Research Centre

Issues: Proportion of patients, and proportion of those with chronic disease, who have a regular general practice (‘that they usually visit’); relationship between having/not having a regular practice, and attendance frequency. Extent of, and reasons for, multiple practice usage among those with a regular practice.

Sample: 7,799 patients from 269 GPs; data collection: 04/06/2013–23/09/2013


Summary of results

The sex-distribution of the responding patients did not differ from that of patients at all BEACH encounters in 2012–13, but this sample had a smaller proportion of patients aged 25–44 years (19.8%, 95% CI: 18.2–21.4) than average (22.5%, 95% CI: 21.8–23.2).

Of the 7,799 respondents, 96.0 (95% CI: 95.2–96.8) said they had a regular practice, 88.1% ‘this’ practice and 7.8% another practice. Adjusted for attendance rates, we estimated 94.4% (95% CI: 93.3–95.5) of the attending population and 80.3% (95% CI: 79.1–81.4) of the total population have a regular practice. Likelihood of having a regular practice did not differ between the sexes, was least likely among babies <1 year (92.2%), and most likely among those aged 65 years or more (98.6%).

Of 7,762 (99.5%) patients for whom presence/absence of diagnosed chronic condition(s) was reported, 70.6% (95% CI: 68.5–72.8) had one or more diagnosed chronic condition(s) and this proportion applied in both sexes. Likelihood increased step-wise with age, from 11.1% of babies (<1 year), to 98.5% of those aged 75 years and over.

Of the 5,482 respondents who had one or more diagnosed chronic condition(s), 97.7% (95% CI: 97.1–98.3) had a regular practice and 2.3% did not. Among those with no chronic conditions (n = 2,280), a significantly smaller proportion, but still the vast majority (91.8%, 95% CI: 89.9–93.7) had a regular practice (80.7% ‘this’ practice and 11.1% another practice).

For 7,702 patients reporting number of GP visits (including the recorded encounter) in the previous 12 months, the mean was 9.2 (95% CI: 8.8–9.6), range 1–115 visits. Those with a regular practice had averaged 9.4 (8.9–9.8) visits, double the average of those without (mean 4.7, 95% CI: 3.7–5.8). Respondents with 1+ chronic conditions visited an average 10.8 times (95% CI: 10.3–11.3), double the rate of those with none (mean 5.2 visits, 95% CI: 4.9–5.5). This suggests the higher attendance rate among those with a regular practice is largely due to the high prevalence of one or more chronic conditions in this group.

Of the 7,485 patients with a regular practice, 7,386 responded to the question on visits to other practices. Of these, 78.4% (95% CI: 76.4–80.4) had not attended any other practice and the remaining 21.6% (n = 1,597) had attended an average of 1.3 (95% CI: 1.3–1.4) practices other than their regular practice over the previous 12 months.

Main reasons for other practice visits were: difficulties getting appointment at regular practice (26%); convenience of location (e.g. work, home) (26%); travelling (12.4%); emergency (12.0%); use for specific problem (9.5%).

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PLEASE READ CAREFULLY
The shaded section of the following forms asks questions about **PRACTICE-BASED CONTINUITY OF CARE**.
You may tear out this page as a guide to completing the following section of forms.

**INSTRUCTIONS**
Ask **EACH** of the **next 30 PATIENTS** the following questions in the order in which the patients are seen.
Please **DO NOT** select patients to suit the topic being investigated.

**Chronic conditions**
Please indicate whether the patient has been **diagnosed with any chronic conditions**.

**Frequency of GP visits**
Please ask the patient approximately how many times (including today's visit) they have **seen any GP for any reason in the past 12 months, at any practice**.
If the patient cannot recall, use your notes or knowledge, to give the best estimate.

**Regular general practice**
Please ask the patient whether they have a **regular general practice that they usually visit**.
If 'yes' please indicate whether the patient regards the **practice they are visiting today** as their regular general practice.
A general practice is defined as a group of primary care practitioners that share medical records.

**General practices visited**
Please ask the patient how many other general practices they have visited in the past 12 months. **Do not include deputising services**.
If the patient did not visit any other general practice please tick the box labelled 'none - only this practice' and end questions here for this patient.

**Reasons for visiting other practices**
For patients who have visited any other general practice/s in the past 12 months, please indicate **why the other practice/s was/were visited**.
Examples of ‘other practices’ used for specific health problems include: a practice that provides specialist services such as acupuncture, skin clinic, seeking a female GP for female problems, etc.

**Types of management provided at other practices**
Please ask the patient whether they received any of the specified **types of management from any other general practice in the past 12 months**.

**Does the patient have any diagnosed chronic conditions?**
- Yes
- No

**Ask the patient:**
Do you have a regular general practice you usually visit?
- Yes - this one
- Yes - another one
- No (a practice is a group of primary care practitioners who share medical records)

**Approx. how many times have you seen any GP in the past 12 months (including today)?**
- [ ] Don't know

**How many other general practices** have you visited in the past 12 months?
- [ ] Don't know

**Why was other practice/s visited?** (tick all that apply)
- [ ] Unable to get appointment at regular practice
- [ ] Other practice/s used for specific problem/s
- [ ] Travelling (e.g. on holiday, away for work)
- [ ] Convenient practice location (e.g. near work, home)
- [ ] Emergency
- [ ] Do not have a regular practice

**At any other practice, have you received any of the following in the past 12 months?** (tick all that apply)
- [ ] Pathology order
- [ ] Imaging order
- [ ] Prescription
- [ ] Referral to specialist
- [ ] Referral to allied health professional
- [ ] Health care plan