SAND abstract No. 121 from the BEACH program 2007–08

Subject: Gastrointestinal symptoms and management among general practice patients

Organisation supporting this study: Janssen-Cilag Pty Ltd

Issues: The proportion of patients who have had listed gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms: heartburn or epigastric pain, acid regurgitation, early satiety, nausea/vomiting, bloating, belching; severity of symptoms; the proportion of patients with GI symptoms who had sought treatment and the source of treatment; whether GP was the source of treatment, diagnosis and regimen of medication prescribed/advised.

Sample: 3,293 patients from 112 GPs; data collection period: 4/12/2007 – 21/01/2008.


Summary of results

There were some differences in the age-sex distribution, with fewer patients aged 5–14 years and fewer males (40.0%, 95% CI: 37.3–42.8), compared with all 2006–07 BEACH encounters (43.7%, 95% CI: 42.9–44.5).

Of the 3,293 respondents, 990 (30.1%, 95% CI: 27.0–33.2) had experienced heartburn, reflux or other GI symptoms, and over two-thirds of these patients indicated the problem was current or in the previous 12 months. GI symptoms were significantly more common in the older age groups (40.6% of those aged 65–74 years and 39.5% of those aged 75 years and over). Heartburn or epigastric pain was indicated for 79.3% of 986 respondents, and acid regurgitation for 41.0%. Early satiety was the least common symptom, indicated for only 5.5% of patients. For the majority of patients the severity of GI symptoms was defined as mild or moderate. However, for 20.2% of patients with heartburn or epigastric pain, and for 17.2% of patients with bloating the symptoms were severe.

Of 980 respondents to a multiple response question on treatment, 768 (78.4%) had sought treatment. Of these, 28.5% had sought treatment from a supermarket/pharmacy, and, of 166 supermarket/pharmacy medications recorded, mylanta accounted for 41.0% and quick-eze for 25.9%.

Treatment had been sought from a GP by 654 patients (85.2% of those who sought treatment), and a diagnosis was recorded for 562 of these respondents: 437 (77.8%) were diagnosed with oesophageal disease, and for 89.9% of these patients the management was medication. Esomeprazole accounted for over one-quarter (26.9%) of the 581 initial medications prescribed by the GP, followed by omeprazole (20.7%) and pantoprazole (13.6%).

Medication review status could be calculated for 502 patients. For 296 patients (59.0%) on an initial medication, there was no change after review. Medication was ceased after review for 13 (2.6%) patients. For 104 patients (20.7%), the medication was changed to a new medication after review. Information was available for 308 patients on the approximate number of months into treatment when the initial medication was first reviewed. Of these, 47.4% were reviewed 1 month into treatment with an initial medication.

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AIHW Australian GP Statistics and Classification Centre, 2008. SAND abstract No.121 from the BEACH program: Gastrointestinal symptoms and management among general practice patients: AGPSCC University of Sydney. ISSN 1444-9072
INSTRUCTIONS

Ask ALL 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.

Heartburn, reflux or gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms

Please use the tick boxes to advise whether this patient has experienced heartburn, reflux or other gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms under the circumstances nominated. Tick as many as apply.

If 'no' you should end the questions here.

If 'yes' to any of the options, please answer the following questions about the patient's symptoms.

Type and severity of symptoms

Please use the tick boxes to indicate which of the listed symptoms are/were experienced by the patient and whether they were considered the primary (1) (predominant) symptom or a secondary (2) symptom. Tick as many as apply.

Beside each symptom experienced, please write in a number to indicate the severity of the symptoms, where:
1 = mild; 2 = moderate; 3 = severe; 4 = very severe.

Please see definition card in your research kit.

Did the patient seek treatment?

□ No → End

□ Yes - supermarket/pharmacy
   (medication name) (duration of use)
   (please specify)

□ Yes - with pharmacist advice
   (medication name) (duration of use)
   (please specify)

□ Yes - from a GP
   The diagnosis was:
   □ Acid regurgitation
   □ Early satiety
   □ Nausea/vomiting
   □ Belching
   □ Blotting

GP management

If treatment was sought from a GP, either today or at a previous encounter, please write the diagnosis in the space provided.

If the diagnosis is unknown (e.g. if the patient previously consulted another GP) please write ‘unknown’ in the space provided.

Treatment sought

Please advise whether the patient sought treatment, either as self-medication from a supermarket or pharmacy, or via specific advice from a pharmacist.

Please advise the name of any medication purchased for treatment of these symptoms, and the approximate duration of its usage in weeks or months per episode.

Please use the tick boxes to advise whether any advised or prescribed medication was taken, how often it was taken after the first two months (even if treatment has since stopped).

PPI use

If the patient was prescribed a proton pump inhibitor, please advise how often it was taken after the first two months of treatment.

If a review has not yet taken place (e.g. if the patient has recently commenced taking the medication) please tick the box labelled 'as above'.

Please also advise the approximate no. of months at which the review occurred.

If two months has not yet lapsed, or a PPI was never prescribed, please tick the box labelled 'n/a' (not applicable).

Has this patient had heartburn, reflux or other GI symptoms?

□ No → End questions

□ Yes → If 'yes' symptoms and severity were:
   (tick all that apply)
   1. Symptom
   □ Heartburn or epigastric pain
   □ Acid regurgitation
   □ Early satiety
   □ Nausea/vomiting
   □ Belching
   □ Blotting
   □ Other

   2. Severity (see card)
   □ 1 = mild
   □ 2 = moderate
   □ 3 = severe
   □ 4 = very severe

   Please see definition card in your research kit.

Did the patient seek treatment?

□ No → End

□ Yes - supermarket/pharmacy
   (medication name) (duration of use)
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