

PATTERNS OF USE OF b/tsDMARDs AND OTHER MEDICATIONS FOR PATIENTS WITH RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS: A RETROSPECTIVE STUDY USING PBS DATA

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Aims

- To describe prescribing patterns for biological/targeted synthetic disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (b/tsDMARDs) for rheumatoid arthritis (RA) in Australia.
- To analyse conventional synthetic (cs)DMARDs, opioid and glucocorticoid prescribing for patients with RA to support quality use of medicines.

Results

- 448 rheumatologists and immunologists were provided with individual reports.

b/tsDMARD and csDMARD prescribing patterns¹

- The number of patients prescribed b/tsDMARDs for RA in Australia increased from 27856 in 2016, to 40375 in 2019 (Figure 1).
- Between 1/1/18 and 31/12/19, 11243 patients commenced treatment with a b/tsDMARD; 87% were previously prescribed methotrexate (10% subcutaneous), 56% hydroxychloroquine, 34% leflunomide, and 30% sulfasalazine.
- Tumour necrosis factor (TNF) inhibitors were the most frequently prescribed first-choice b/tsDMARD (64%) (Figure 2).

Figure 1. Number of patients dispensed prescriptions for b/tsDMARDs for RA in Australia (2016–2019)

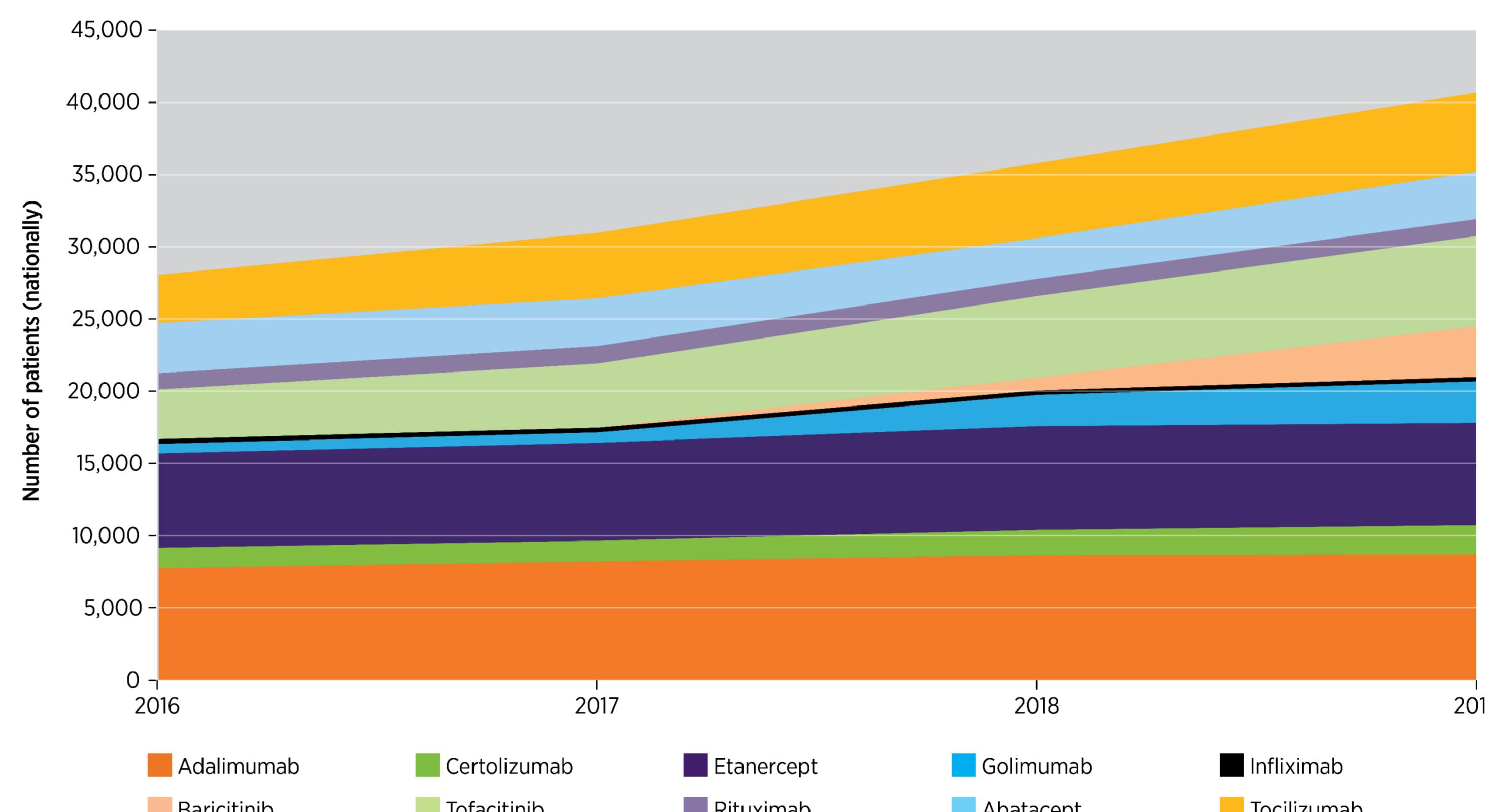
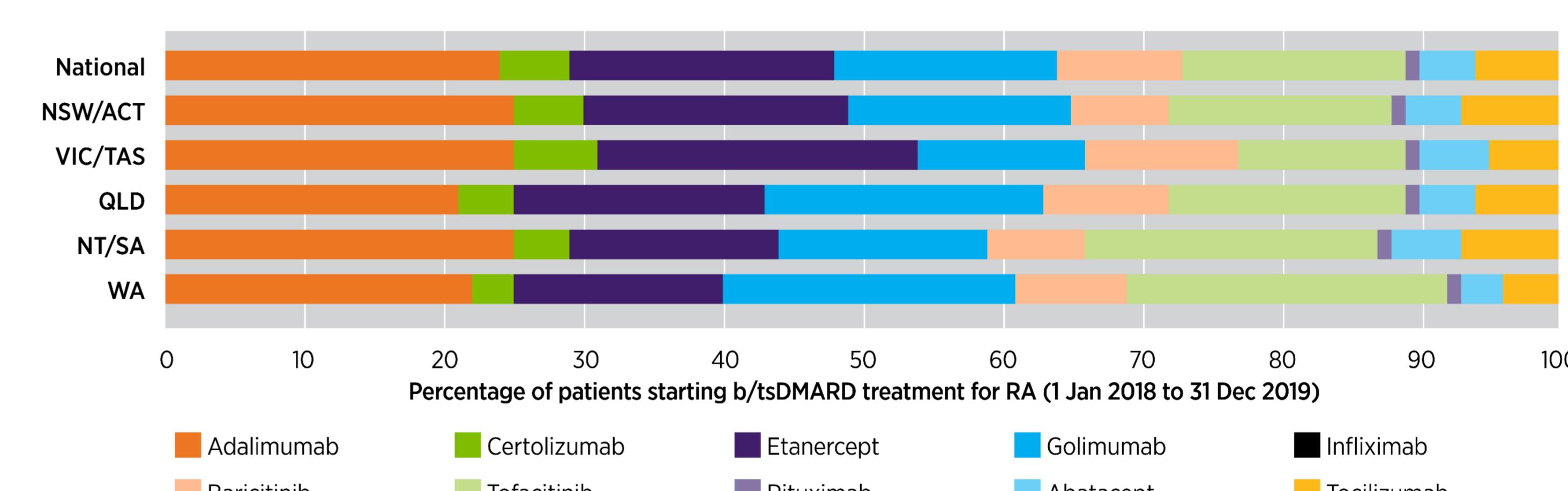


Figure 2. Choice of first-line b/tsDMARD treatment for patients with RA in Australia



Glucocorticoid and opioid prescribing¹

- Approximately 50% of patients were prescribed glucocorticoids by any prescriber ≥ 6 months after starting b/tsDMARD treatment between 1/11/16 and 31/10/18 (Figure 3).
- Between 1/1/18 and 31/12/19, 43169 patients were prescribed a b/tsDMARD, 48% were also prescribed opioids by any provider (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Prescribing of glucocorticoids ≥ 6 months after starting a b/tsDMARD treatment for RA

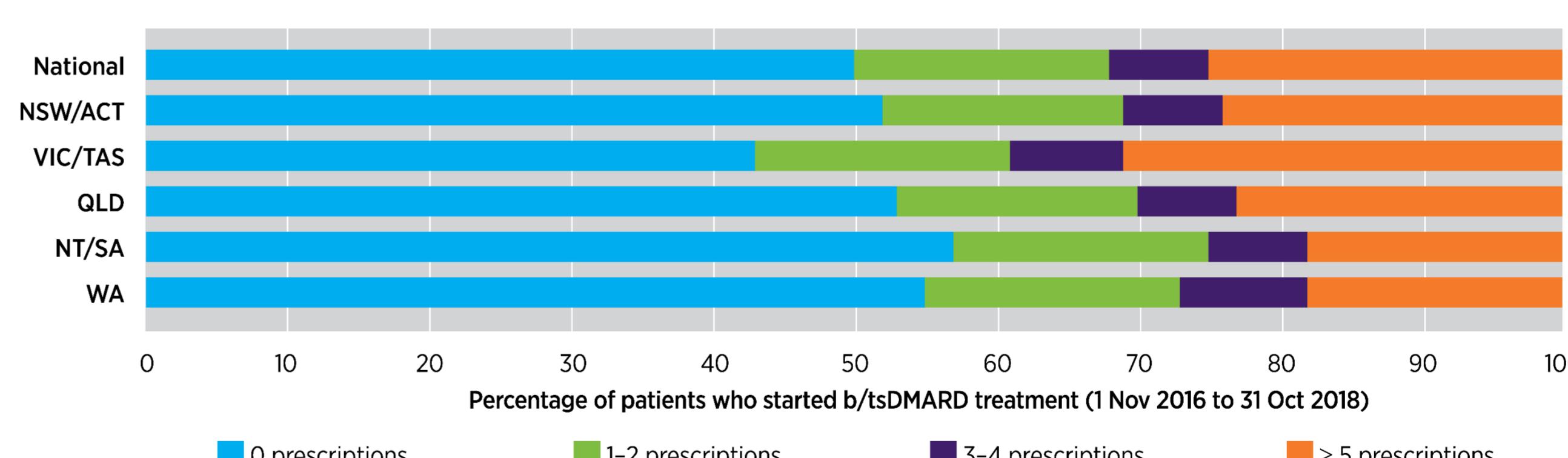
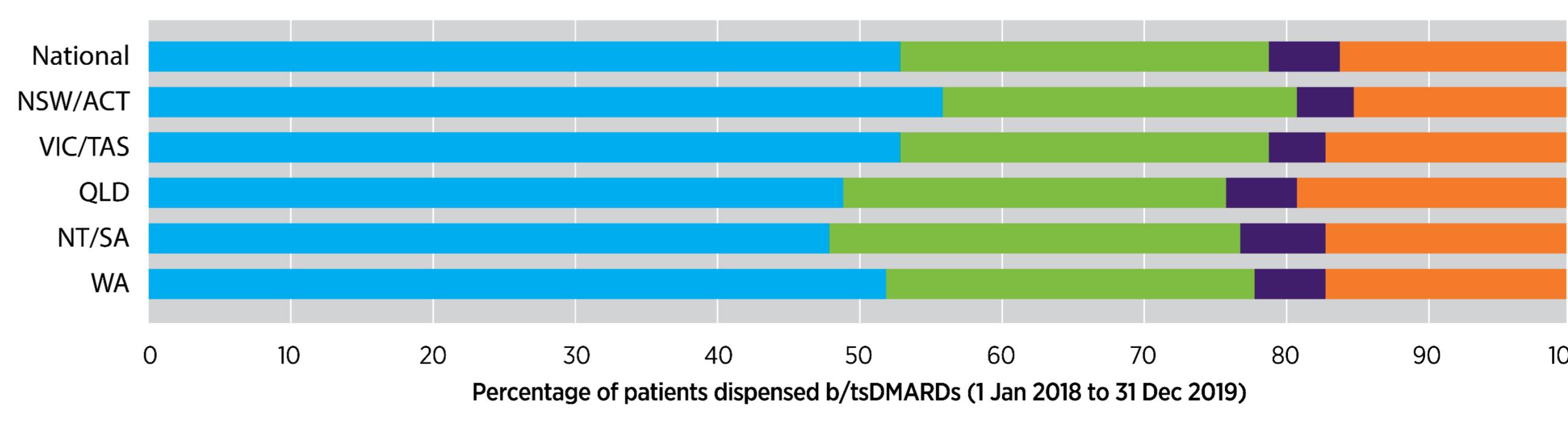


Figure 4. Prescribing of opioids for patients also prescribed a b/tsDMARD for RA



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For more information, visit www.nps.org.au/pbs-bdmards

¹The data provided from Services Australia reflect the date the prescription was dispensed, and do not reflect the duration of use of the medicine by the patient

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Helping consumers and health professionals make safe and wise therapeutic decisions about biological disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs (bDMARDs) and other specialised medicines. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health through the Value in Prescribing bDMARDs Program Grant.

