

# 6.1 Viral Encephalitis

## Summary

Number of cases, 2009: 5  
 Number of cases, 2008: 5  
 Number of cases, 2007: 8  
 Crude incidence rate, 2009: 0.1/100,000

Not all viral infections are notifiable, but some can and do cause encephalitis. In this chapter, the focus is on those viral pathogens that cause encephalitis, but are not notifiable in their own right (apart from one exception, herpes simplex virus).

In 2009, five cases of viral encephalitis (caused by non-notifiable organisms) were notified in Ireland, which is a crude incidence rate of 0.12 per 100,000 total population. The number of viral encephalitis notifications in 2009 is the same as that which was reported in 2008, and less than the eight reported in 2007 and the 16 recorded in 2006. The decrease in viral encephalitis in 2007, compared to 2006 was particularly related to a decrease in varicella zoster virus associated encephalitis notifications. Between 2004 and 2009, 45 cases of viral encephalitis were notified, 20 of which (44.4%) were attributable to herpes simplex virus.

Table 1. Number, age-specific incidence rates per 100,000 population and proportion of viral encephalitis cases by age group, 2009

Age Group	Number	Proportion (%)	ASIR
<1	0	0%	0.0
1-4	0	0%	0.0
5-9	0	0%	0.0
10-44	2	40%	0.1
45-64	1	20%	0.1
65+	2	40%	0.4
All ages	5	100%	0.1

ASIR, age specific incidence rates per 100,000 population

Of the five cases notified in 2009, three cases occurred in males and two in females giving a ratio of 1.5:1.0.

Cases ranged in age from 41 to 86 years. The highest incidence rates were in adults aged  $\geq 65$  years (0.4/100,000) (table 1).

The causative agent was identified in four of the five cases of viral encephalitis notified; herpes simplex virus (n=3), varicella zoster virus (n=1) and unknown (n=1). Three of the cases due to herpes simplex occurred in adults aged between 40 and 74 years. Another case was caused by varicella zoster virus in an adult aged 85+ years. No deaths from viral encephalitis were notified between 1997 and 2009.

The figures presented in this summary are based on data extracted from the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2010. These figures may differ from those published previously due to ongoing updating of notification data on CIDR.

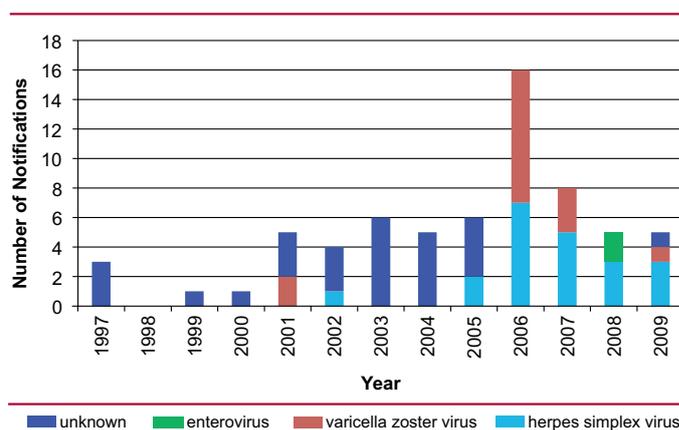


Figure 1. Annual number of viral encephalitis notifications, 1997-2009