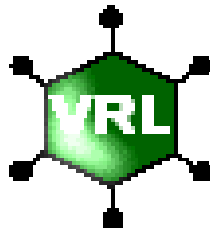


Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



Week 6 2002

Report produced: 13/02/2002

This report is produced in collaboration with the Departments of Public Health

Influenza Activity in Ireland

During week 6, the week ending the 10th of February 2002, the GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness (ILI) remained at low levels. Seven ILI cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to a consultation rate of 10 per 100,000 population. Reports were received from 26 sentinel GPs, with 6 reporting ILI cases.

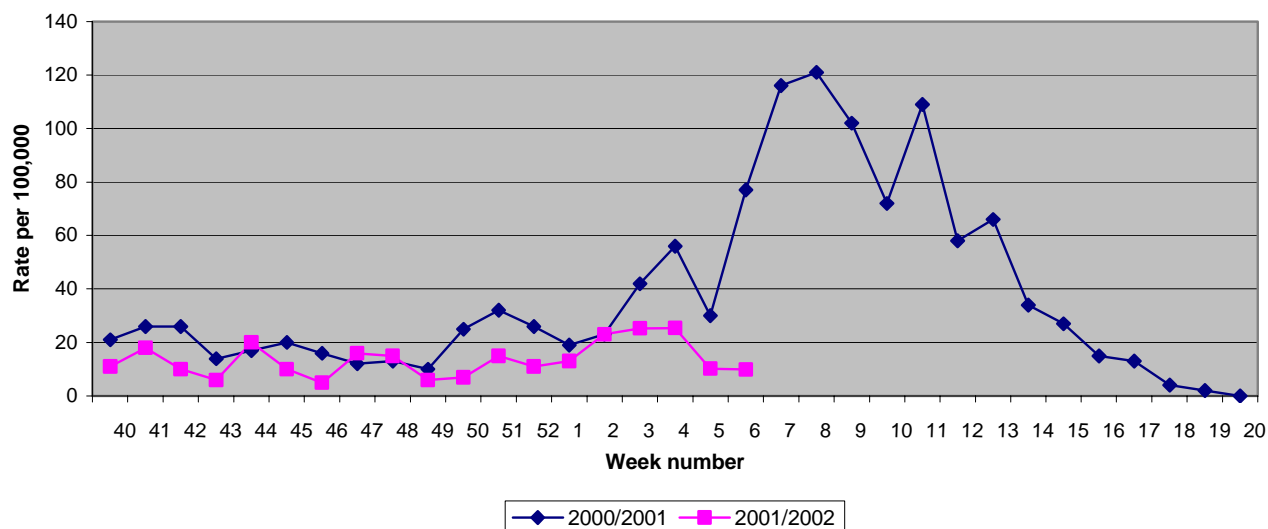


Figure 1: GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 influenza seasons.

Virological Data from the Virus Reference Laboratory (VRL)

During week 6 2002, 15 swabs were received from sentinel GPs, 7 of these were positive for influenza virus. Six swabs were positive for influenza A (unsubtyped) and one was positive for influenza A (H3N2). The results for week 5 have been updated; 3 influenza A viruses were detected, one A (H1N1), one A (H3N2) and one A (unsubtyped). No influenza B viruses have been detected this season. To date, there have been no laboratory confirmed cases of influenza A (H1N2) in Ireland.

The VRL have tested 437 respiratory specimens from non-sentinel specimens (hospitals and GPs), since the start of the influenza season. During week 6, 19 specimens were positive for RSV, bringing the total RSV cases detected this season to 136. No influenza viruses have been isolated from non-sentinel specimens.

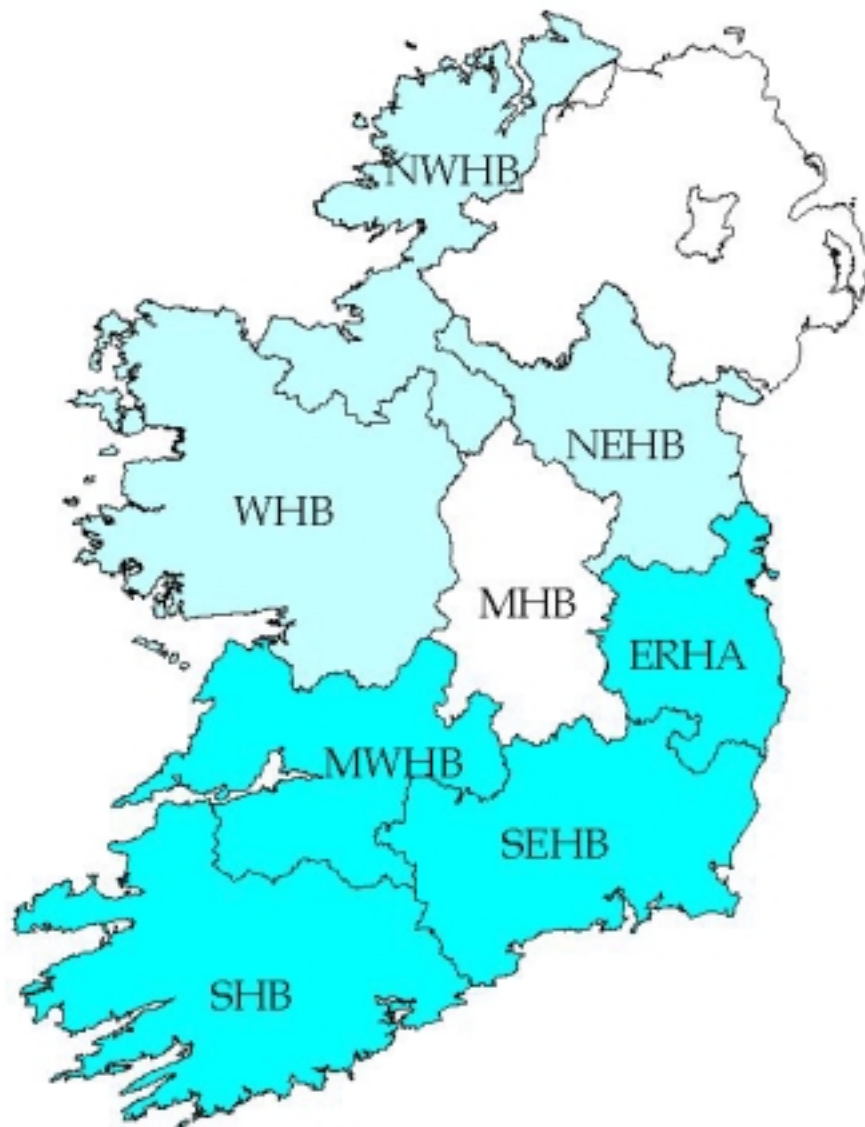
Table 1: Sentinel influenza results by type, subtype and report week for 2001/2002

Week number	Number of swabs	Percentage Positive	Influenza A (unsubtyped)	Influenza A (H1N1)	Influenza A (H3N2)	Influenza B
40	5	0%				
41	4	0%				
42	4	0%				
43	2	0%				
44	2	0%				
45	6	0%				
46	3	0%				
47	10	0%				
48	8	0%				
49	6	0%				
50	8	0%				
51	9	0%				
52	1	0%				
1	7	0%				
2	9	0%				
3	12	33%		1	3	
4	14	43%			6	
5	15	20%	1	1	1	
6	15	47%	6		1	
Total	140	14%	7	2	11	0

Influenza Activity by Health Board/Authority

Influenza activity for week 5 (week ending the 3rd of February 2002) was reported from the Departments of Public Health. Influenza activity is based on sentinel GP ILI consultation rates, laboratory confirmed cases of influenza, hospital admissions data, and/or school absenteeism levels. During week 5, four health boards reported sporadic activity and three reported no activity.

Influenza Activity - Week 5



Influenza Activity in Northern Ireland

The GP consultation rate for combined influenza and ILI increased to a rate of 30 per 100,000 in week 6. One positive influenza A (H3N2) swab was detected from a hospital in-patient. This is the 4th positive swab of influenza A (H3N2) detected in Northern Ireland since the start of the season, all in paediatric cases.

Influenza Activity in England, Scotland and Wales

During week 5, the GP consultation rate for influenza and ILI decreased in England and Wales, to 43 per 100,000 and 9 per 100,000, respectively. An increase in the GP consultation rate was reported in Scotland, from 387 per 100,000 in week 4, to 41 per 100,000 in week 5. All influenza A (H1) detections from this season are undergoing characterisation. The newly discovered strain of influenza A (H1N2) has been detected in both hospital and community sources.

Influenza Activity in Europe

During week 5, influenza activity levels ranged from none to widespread in Europe. Influenza activity was described as widespread in Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland. Influenza activity was regional in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway. Other European countries reported sporadic or localised activity with variable clinical morbidity rates. Influenza A (H3N2) remains the dominant virus in Europe. Influenza B was also detected in Italy, Slovakia and Slovenia. England and Scotland remain the only 2 European countries to have isolated influenza A (H1N2).

Influenza Activity in Canada

During week 5, influenza activity was localised in regions of Quebec, Ontario and British Columbia. Sentinel physicians reported 38 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits. Health Canada received 2286 reports of laboratory tests for influenza: 17% were positive for influenza A and 1% was positive for influenza B.

Influenza Activity in the United States

In week 5, the overall proportion of patient visits to sentinel physicians for ILI was 3.1%, which is above the national baseline of 1.9%. Nine state and territorial health departments reported widespread influenza activity, 21 reported regional activity, and 20 reported sporadic activity. During week 5, 410 respiratory specimens were positive for influenza. Ninety-three influenza A (H3N2) viruses, 312 influenza A (unsubtyped) viruses and 5 influenza B viruses were identified. Since October 1st 2001, all influenza viruses antigenically characterised by CDC are similar to the current vaccine. The CDC and the Wisconsin Division of Public Health have identified an influenza A (H1N2) virus from a patient specimen collected during December 2001. No unusual levels of disease have been associated with this virus and it is uncertain if the A (H1N2) virus will persist and circulate widely. The current vaccine should provide good protection against the new strain.

Influenza Activity Worldwide

No influenza activity was reported in Argentina during week 5. Localised activity was reported in Israel. In the Russian Federation, 30 cities reported ILI exceeding epidemic threshold levels, with the highest morbidity in 0-2 year olds.

This report was prepared by Lisa Domegan, Surveillance Scientist, NDSC.