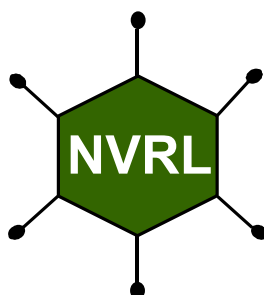


Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



Week 14 2003

Report produced: 10/04/2003

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

Summary

Influenza activity remains at low levels in Ireland during week 14. The GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness decreased. Influenza A was the dominant influenza virus type circulating in Ireland and Europe during week 14.

Clinical data from sentinel GPs

During week 14 2003 (the week ending the 6th of April 2003), 14 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 16.2 per 100,000 population. The consultation rate has decreased from the rate of 22.5 per 100,000 in week 13 2003. Thirty-one of the 34 (91.2%) sentinel practices reported during week 14 2003, with 10 reporting ILI (figure 1). Two ILI cases were aged between 0 and 4 years, two were in the 5-14 year age group, 9 were in the 15-64 year age group and one case was over 65 years of age.

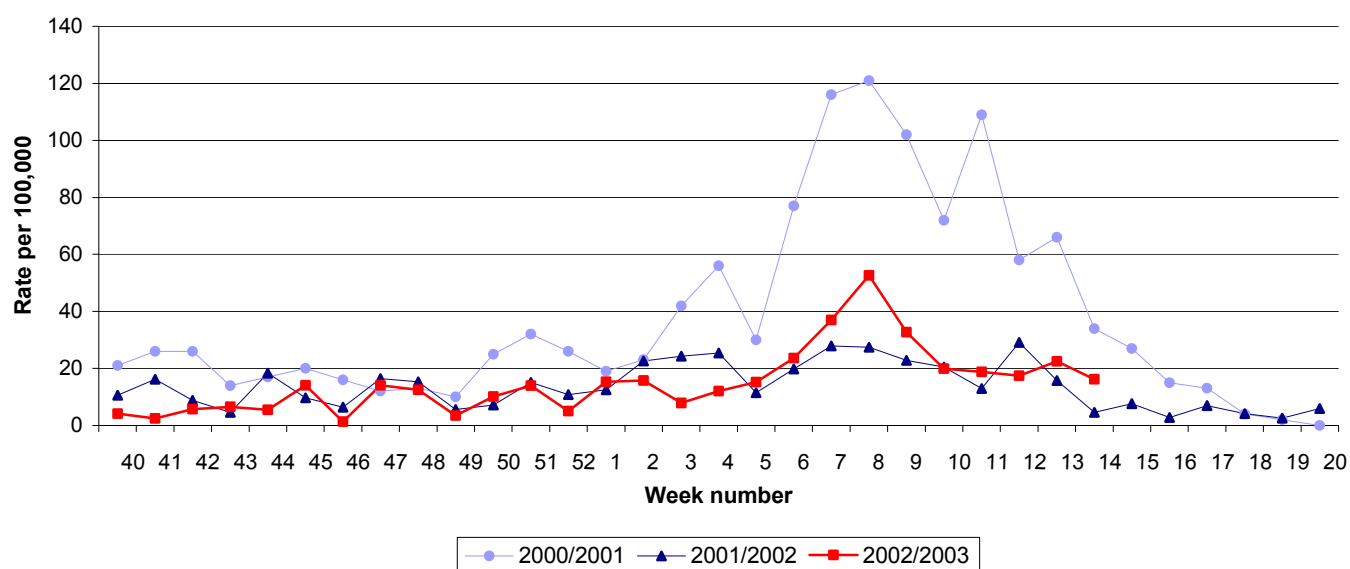


Figure 1: GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Virological data

During week 14, the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 10 swabs from sentinel GPs. Four swabs were positive for influenza virus: 3 influenza A and 1 influenza B virus (table 1). Two influenza A cases were aged between 45 and 54 years of age and 1 influenza A case was over 65 years of age. The influenza B case was aged between 10 and 19 years of age. The NVRL also tested 15 non-sentinel respiratory specimens mainly from hospitals during week 14; there were no positives for respiratory syncytial virus or influenza virus (RSV; figure 2).

Table 1: Sentinel influenza results by type, subtype and report week for 2002/2003

<i>Week number</i>	<i>Total swabs</i>	<i>Positive swabs</i>	<i>Percentage positive</i>	<i>A (unsubtyped)</i>	<i>A (H1N1)</i>	<i>A (H1N2)</i>	<i>A (H3N2)</i>	<i>B</i>
14	10	4	40.0%	3	0	0	0	1
Season Total	215	74	34.4%	13	0	0	5	56

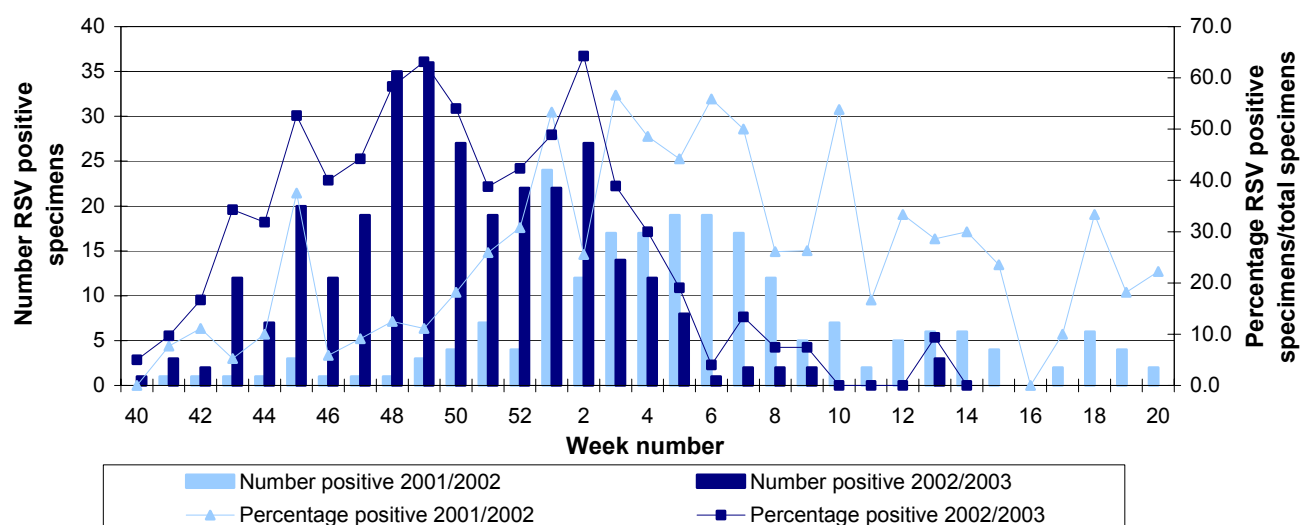


Figure 2: Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Influenza activity by health board/authority

Influenza activity is reported on a weekly basis from the Departments of Public Health. Influenza activity is based on sentinel GP ILI consultation rates, laboratory confirmed cases of influenza, sentinel hospital admissions data, and/or sentinel school absenteeism data. During week 13, sporadic influenza activity was reported in 6 health boards (ERHA, MWHB, NEHB, NWHB, SEHB & SHB) and no influenza activity was reported in the MHB and WHB.

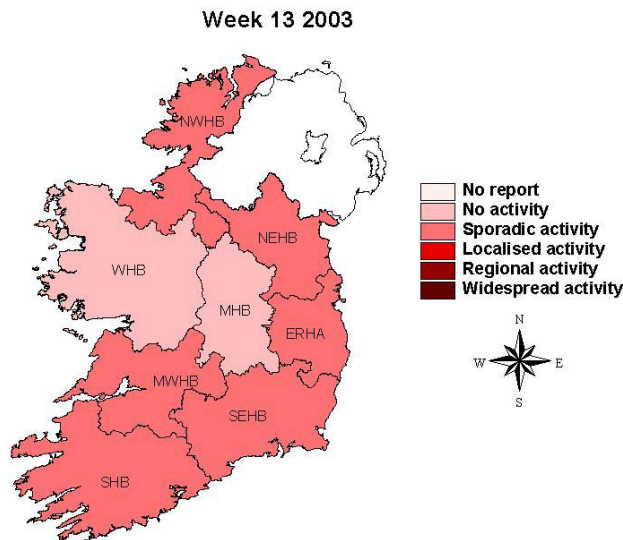


Figure 3: Map of influenza activity by health boards/authority during week 13 2003

Influenza activity in Northern Ireland

During week 14, 21 of 24 sentinel general practices reported a combined clinical influenza and ILI rate of 28.8 per 100,000 population. The first positive specimen of influenza A (H3) this season in Northern Ireland was detected through the sentinel surveillance system during week 13. No influenza positive specimens were detected through hospitalized patients or non-sentinel GPs <http://www.cdscni.org.uk/>

Influenza activity in England, Scotland and Wales

Clinical indicators of influenza activity remain at baseline levels during week 14. In England, GP consultation rates for ILI decreased from a rate of 22.2 per 100,000 in week 13 to a rate of 16.5 per 100,000 in week 14. In Wales and Scotland, the GP consultation rates also decreased to 1.85 and 4.0 per 100,000, respectively, in week 14. Influenza A was the dominant influenza virus type circulating throughout the UK during week 14 (virus detections were at low levels). Eight positive detections for influenza [2 A (H1) and 6 A (H3N2)] were referred to the ERNVL during week 13. http://www.phls.co.uk/topics_az/influenza/fluactivity0203.htm

Influenza activity in Europe

During week 13, Poland, Germany, Italy and Switzerland reported regional influenza activity. Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia reported localised activity. Sporadic activity was reported in England, Ireland, Norway, Scotland, Spain and Sweden. No influenza activity was reported in Portugal and Northern Ireland. Compared to week 12, clinical morbidity rates declined in eleven networks reporting to the European Influenza Surveillance Scheme (EISS) and remained stable in five. The percentage of sentinel specimens that tested positive for influenza was 30.6% (28.5% in week 12), and ranged from 0% (in ten networks) to 50% (in Ireland). Influenza A was the most frequent influenza type in Europe in week 13. <http://www.eiss.org/index.cgi>

Influenza activity in Canada

In Canada during week 13, Saskatchewan, Quebec, parts of Alberta, Manitoba and Nova Scotia all reported localised influenza activity. Sentinel physicians reported 35 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits, which is within the expected rate for the time of year. Health Canada received 1666 reports of laboratory tests for influenza, including 46 influenza A and 167 influenza B.

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/fluwatch/index.html>

Influenza activity in the United States

During week 13, the proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for ILI was 1.2%, which is below the national baseline. Nineteen state and territorial health departments reported regional influenza activity, 28 reported sporadic activity and 2 reported no influenza activity. The WHO and NREVSS laboratories reported 1465 specimens tested for influenza viruses, of which 94 were positive: 11 A (H1), 3 A (H3N2), 61 A (unsubtyped) and 19 B viruses.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm>

Influenza activity Worldwide

Sporadic influenza activity was reported in Hong Kong during week 13, with influenza A (H3N2) predominating. Sporadic influenza activity was also reported in the Russian Federation. <http://oms2.b3e.jussieu.fr/flunet/>

Influenza vaccine for the 2003/2004-influenza season

On February the 28th 2003, WHO published a recommendation on the composition of influenza vaccines for use in the 2003-2004 influenza season.

- A/New Caledonia/20/99(H1N1)-like virus
- A/Moscow/10/99(H3N2)-like virus*
- B/Hong Kong/330/2001-like virus**

* The widely used vaccine strain is A/Panama/2007/99

** Currently used vaccine strains include B/Shandong/7/97, B/Hong Kong/330/2001, B/Hong Kong/1434/2002

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/vaccinerecommendations1/en/>

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

As of April 9th, 2722 suspected and probable cases of SARS, including 106 deaths, have been reported from 16 countries to the WHO. As of April 10th 2003, only one probable SARS case is being investigated in Ireland, in the Western Health Board.

For further information on SARS and daily updates:

<http://www.ndsc.ie/DiseaseTopicsA-Z/SevereAcuteRespiratorySyndrome/>

<http://www.who.int/csr/sars/en/>

This report was produced by Dr Lisa Domegan, NDSC.