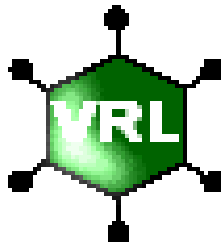


Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



Week 5 2003

Report produced: 06/02/2003

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

Summary

The GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness increased during week 5. The dominant circulating virus type during week 5 was influenza B.

Clinical data from sentinel GPs

During week 5 2003 (the week ending the 2nd of February 2003), 12 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 13.99 per 100,000 population. The consultation rate has increased from the rate of 10.52 per 100,000 in week 4 2003. Thirty-one of the 34 (91.2%) sentinel practices reported during week 5 2003, with 7 reporting ILI (figure 1).

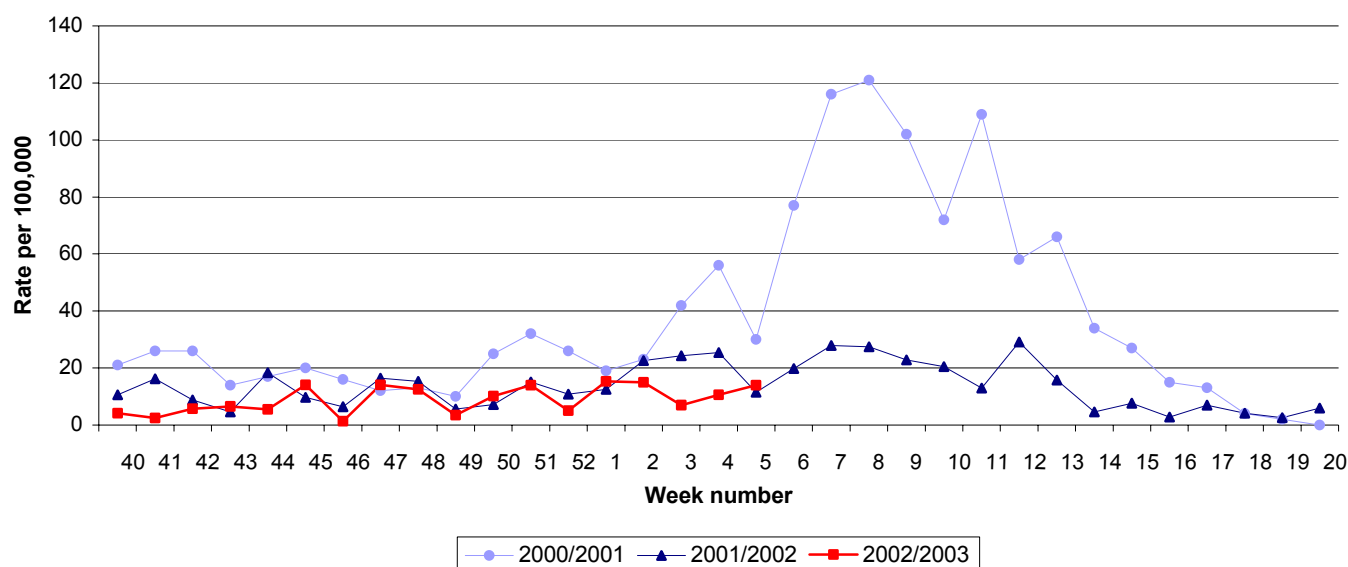


Figure 1: GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Virological data

During week 5, the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 15 swabs from sentinel GPs. Five swabs were positive for influenza virus: 1 A (unsubtyped) and 4 influenza B (table 1). Forty-two respiratory specimens from non-sentinel sources (mainly hospitals) were referred to the NVRL during week 5, 8 (19.1%) were positive for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), a decrease in the percentage positive specimens from previous weeks. Since the start of the 2002/2003-influenza season, 298 (42.3%) of 704 respiratory specimens were positive for RSV. This is compared to 117 (29.0%) of 403 respiratory specimens positive for RSV during the same period in the 2001/2002 influenza season (RSV; figure 2). Two respiratory non-sentinel specimens were also positive for Adenovirus during week 5.

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>
40	4	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
41	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
42	4	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
43	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
44	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
45	7	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
46	1	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
47	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
48	6	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
49	3	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
50	5	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
51	8	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
52	4	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
1	7	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0
2	11	1	9.1%	0	0	0	0	1
3	8	1	12.5%	0	0	0	1	0
4	15	2	13.3%	0	0	0	1	1
5	15	5	33.3%	1	0	0	0	4
Total	108	9	8.3%	1	0	0	2	6

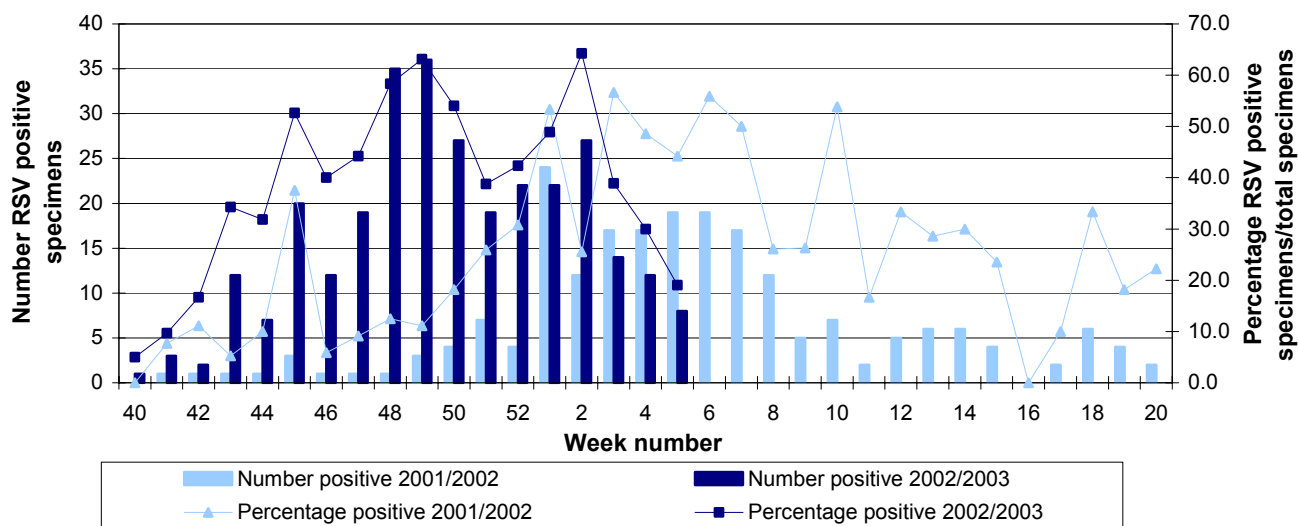


Figure 2: Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

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 3, 7 health boards reported no influenza activity and one (NEHB) reported sporadic influenza activity. During week 4, sporadic influenza activity was reported from the MHB, NWHB and ERHA with the remaining health boards reporting no influenza activity (figure 3).

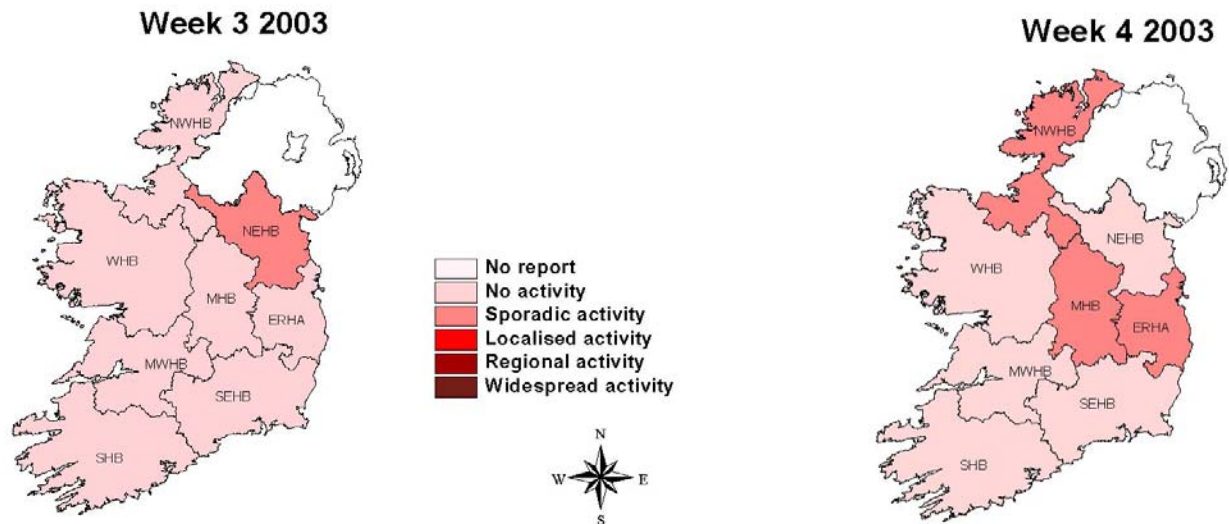


Figure 3: Map of influenza activity by health boards/authority during week 3 & 4 2003

Influenza activity in Northern Ireland

During week 5, 22 of the 24 sentinel GPs reported 59 cases of ILI and clinical flu corresponding to a GP consultation rate of 43.7 per 100,000. There were no influenza virus detections either through normal laboratory testing or through the sentinel surveillance system. <http://www.cdscni.org.uk/>

Influenza activity in England, Scotland and Wales

In England, the GP consultation rate for ILI changed little from a rate of 23.6 per 100,000 in week 4 to 24.5 per 100,000 in week 5. In Wales, the consultation rate decreased from a rate of 3.26 per 100,000 in week 4 to 0.47 per 100,000 in week 5. In Scotland, the GP consultation rate remained unchanged at a rate of 31 consultations per 100,000 in week 5. Influenza B continues to be the major virus type circulating in the UK, with 12 positive detections referred to the ERNVL. ILI outbreaks reported in a number of schools in Southern England were associated with influenza B.

http://www.phls.co.uk/topics_az/influenza/fluactivity0203.htm

Influenza activity in Europe

During week 4, influenza activity remained low to moderate in Europe, however sporadic influenza activity is slowly increasing. Six networks reporting to the

European Influenza Surveillance Scheme (EISS) reported no influenza activity and 8 networks reported sporadic activity. Three networks reported localised activity and regional activity was reported in France and Spain. The total number of respiratory specimens collected by sentinel physicians in week 4 was 642, with 16.7% positive for influenza virus. Overall, influenza B was the dominant type in week 4, particularly in Spain, Portugal, France and Switzerland. Further east, influenza A was more dominant. All of the influenza viruses detected to date this season by EISS have been similar to the 2002/2003 influenza vaccine strains. <http://www.eiss.org/index.cgi>

Influenza activity in Canada

Widespread influenza activity was reported in southwest Ontario and localized activity was reported in eastern Canada during week 4. Ten provinces and territories reported either sporadic or no influenza activity. Sentinel physicians reported 15 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits, which is below the expected rate for the time of year. Health Canada received 1482 reports of laboratory tests for influenza: 85 influenza A and 3 influenza B. All viruses identified this season are closely related to the current vaccine strains. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/fluwatch/index.html>

Influenza activity in the United States

During week 4, the proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for ILI was 2.6%, which is above the national baseline. Three state and territorial health departments reported widespread activity, 14 reported regional activity, 32 reported sporadic activity and 1 reported no influenza activity. During week 4, the WHO and NREVSS laboratories reported 1475 specimens tested for influenza viruses, 148 were positive [21 A (H1), 3 A (H3N2), 59 A (unsubtyped) and 65 B viruses]. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm>

Influenza activity Worldwide

No influenza activity was reported in Argentina during week 4. Sporadic activity was reported in Hong Kong, French Guiana and Mexico. In Hong Kong, the activity was mainly associated with influenza A (H3N2) and influenza B. Localised activity was reported in Finland, with low intensity outbreaks among young conscripts in garrisons and more intense outbreaks in schools. In Israel, localised influenza activity was associated with influenza B. In the Russian Federation, increased morbidity has exceeded epidemic thresholds in 7 cities. <http://oms2.b3e.jussieu.fr/flunet/>

This report was produced by Dr Lisa Domegan, NDSC.