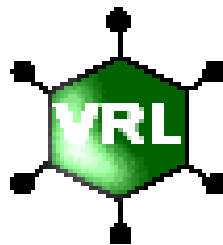


# Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



**Weeks 51 & 52 2002**

**Report produced: 08/01/2003**

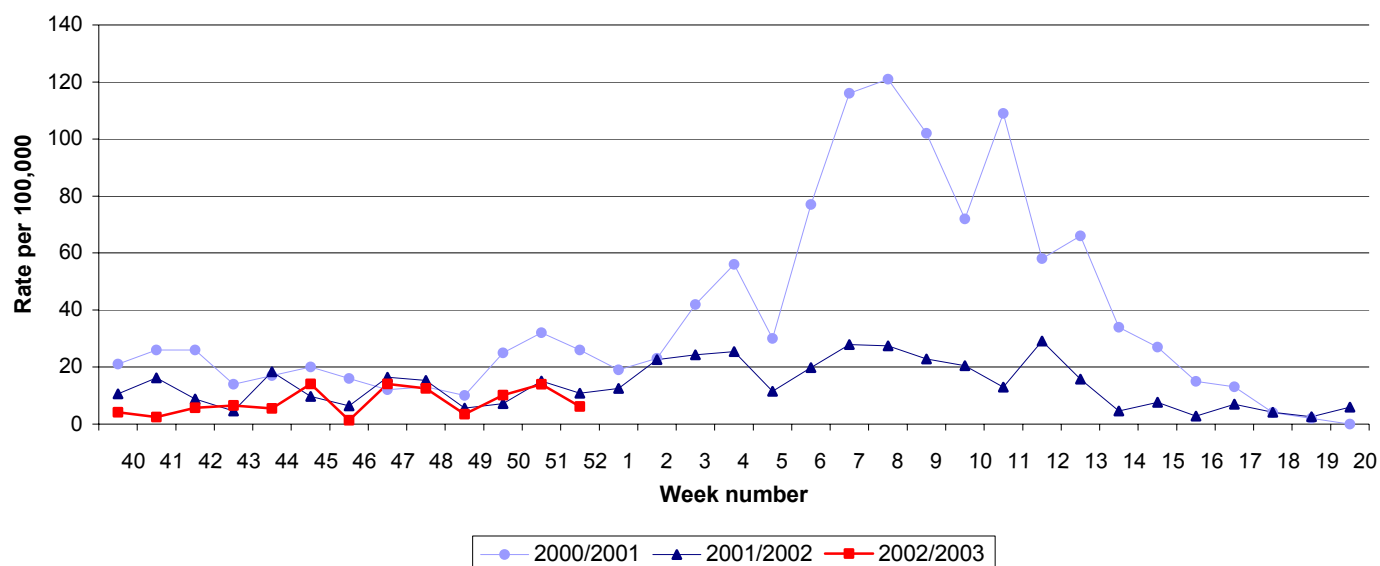
**This report is produced in collaboration with the Departments of Public Health**

### Summary

The sentinel GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness remains at low levels. Influenza virus has not been detected this season in sentinel or non-sentinel specimens. Respiratory syncytial virus positive specimens remain at high levels compared to previous seasons, but have decreased over the last 3 weeks. Data for week 52 may have been affected by the Christmas holiday period.

### Clinical data from sentinel GPs

During week 51 (the week ending the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 2002), 9 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 13.9 per 100,000 population. Twenty-six (78.7%) of the 33 sentinel general practices reported during week 51, with 7 sentinel practices reporting ILI. During week 52 (the week ending the 29<sup>th</sup> of December 2002), 4 cases of ILI were reported corresponding to an ILI rate of 6.1 per 100,000. Twenty-five (75.8%) of the 33 sentinel GPs reported during week 52, with 4 reporting ILI. Data during week 52 may have been affected by the Christmas holiday period (figure 1).



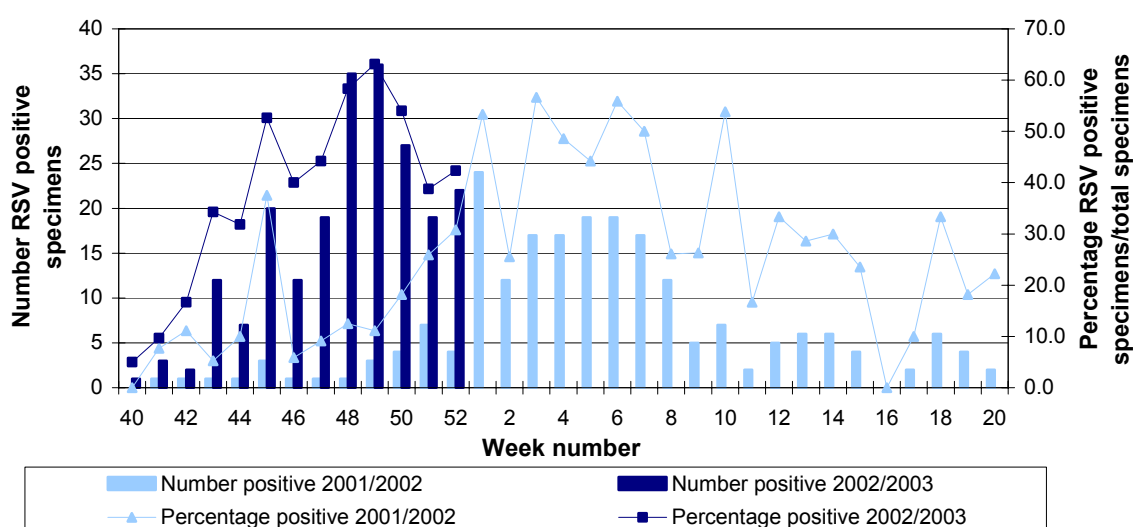
**Figure 1:** GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

### Virological data

The National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 12 swabs from sentinel GPs during weeks 51 and 52, all of which were negative for influenza virus (table 1). There have been no positive detections of influenza virus this season. During weeks 51 and 52, 101 respiratory specimens from non-sentinel sources (mainly hospitals) were referred to the NVRL, 41 (40.6%) were positive for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). The number and percentage of respiratory specimens positive for RSV peaked in week 49. Since the start of the 2002/2003-influenza season, 215 (43.1%) of 499 respiratory specimens were positive for RSV. This is compared to 28 (13.8%) of 203 respiratory specimens positive for RSV during the same period in the 2001/2002 influenza season (RSV; figure 2). One respiratory specimen was positive for parainfluenza type 1 virus during week 52.

**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
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

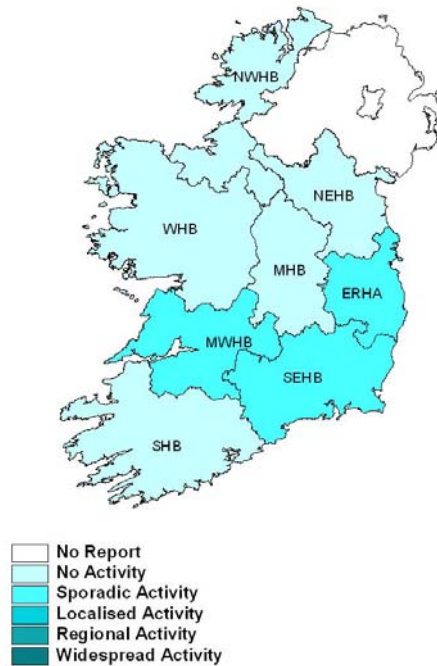


**Figure 2:** Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

**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. To date this season, little or no influenza activity has been reported in most health boards. During week 50, 3 of 8 health boards/authority reported sporadic influenza activity; the remainder reported no influenza activity (figure 3).

## Influenza Activity - Week 50



**Figure 3:** Map of influenza activity by health boards/authority during week 50 2002

### **Influenza activity in Northern Ireland**

In Northern Ireland, low levels of clinical influenza activity were reported during weeks 51 & 52. No influenza viruses have been detected in Northern Ireland to date this season. <http://www.cdscni.org.uk/>

### **Influenza activity in England, Scotland and Wales**

In England, GP consultations for ILI decreased from 20.5 per 100,000 in week 51 to 11.9 per 100,000 in week 52. In Wales and Scotland, the rates remain low and within baseline levels. There have been 4 positive detections of influenza A (H3N2), 2 influenza A (unsubtyped) and 2 influenza B viruses, between weeks 40 and 52 2002. Three influenza isolates have been reported in the UK during this period; 2 B and 1 A (H3N2), all were covered by the current vaccine. Laboratory reports of RSV have continued to increase. [http://www.phls.co.uk/topics\\_az/influenza/fluactivity0203.htm](http://www.phls.co.uk/topics_az/influenza/fluactivity0203.htm)

### **Influenza activity in Europe**

During week 50, clinical morbidity levels for ILI were slightly elevated in many countries, particularly in younger age groups. Influenza B was increasingly contributing to clinical morbidity particularly in southwest Europe. During week 51, low levels of influenza activity were reported across Europe. Twenty-five positive sentinel specimens were identified during week 51: 17 influenza B (8 in Spain, 7 in France, and 2 in Belgium), 5 influenza A (H1N1) (all in France) and 3 influenza A (unsubtyped) (2 in France and 1 in Germany). <http://www.eiss.org/index.cgi>

### **Influenza activity in Canada**

During week 50 in Canada, 10 provinces reported no influenza activity, and 3 reported sporadic and localised activity. Sentinel physicians reported 27 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits. Health Canada received 1162 reports of tests for influenza: 3.8% were positive for influenza A and 0.1% were positive for influenza B. During

week 51, 7 provinces reported no influenza activity, and 3 reported sporadic and localised activity. Sentinel physicians reported 26 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits. Health Canada received 848 reports of tests for influenza: 5.4% were positive for influenza A. The current vaccine covers all viruses characterised to date this season. Detections of other respiratory viruses circulating in the Canadian population remain within expected levels, however RSV detections increased during weeks 50 and 51. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/fluwatch/index.html>

### **Influenza activity in the United States**

During weeks 50 and 51, the proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers was less than the national baseline of 1.9%. In week 50, one state and territorial health department reported widespread influenza activity, 3 reported regional activity, 23 reported sporadic activity and 23 reported no influenza activity. WHO laboratories reported 929 specimens tested for influenza virus, of which 3 were positive for influenza A (H1) viruses and 27 were positive for influenza B viruses. In week 51, one state and territorial health department reported widespread influenza activity, 5 reported regional activity, 22 reported sporadic activity and 19 reported no influenza activity. The WHO and NREVSS laboratories reported 1301 specimens tested for influenza viruses, of which 4 were influenza A (unsubtyped) and 6 were influenza B viruses. <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm>

### **Influenza activity Worldwide**

During weeks 50 and 51, no influenza activity was reported in Argentina and Iceland. In week 50, the Russian Federation, Israel, Hong Kong, and Mexico all reported sporadic activity. In week 51, French Guiana, the Russian Federation, Hong Kong and Israel reported sporadic activity. In Hong Kong, sporadic activity was associated with influenza A (H3N2) and influenza B. In Israel, sporadic activity was associated with influenza B. <http://oms2.b3e.jussieu.fr/flunet/>

**This report was produced by Dr Lisa Domegan, NDSC.**