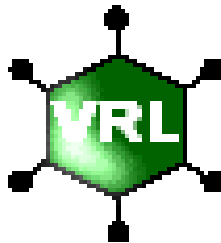


Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



Week 50 2002

Report produced: 18/12/2002

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

Summary

The sentinel GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness has increased slightly but remains at low levels. Influenza virus has not been detected this season in sentinel or non-sentinel specimens. Respiratory syncytial virus remains at high levels compared to previous seasons.

Clinical data from sentinel GPs

During week 50 (the week ending the 15th of December 2002), 6 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 10.1 per 100,000 population (figure 1). Twenty-seven (81.8%) of the 33 sentinel general practices reported during week 50, with 4 sentinel practices reporting ILI.

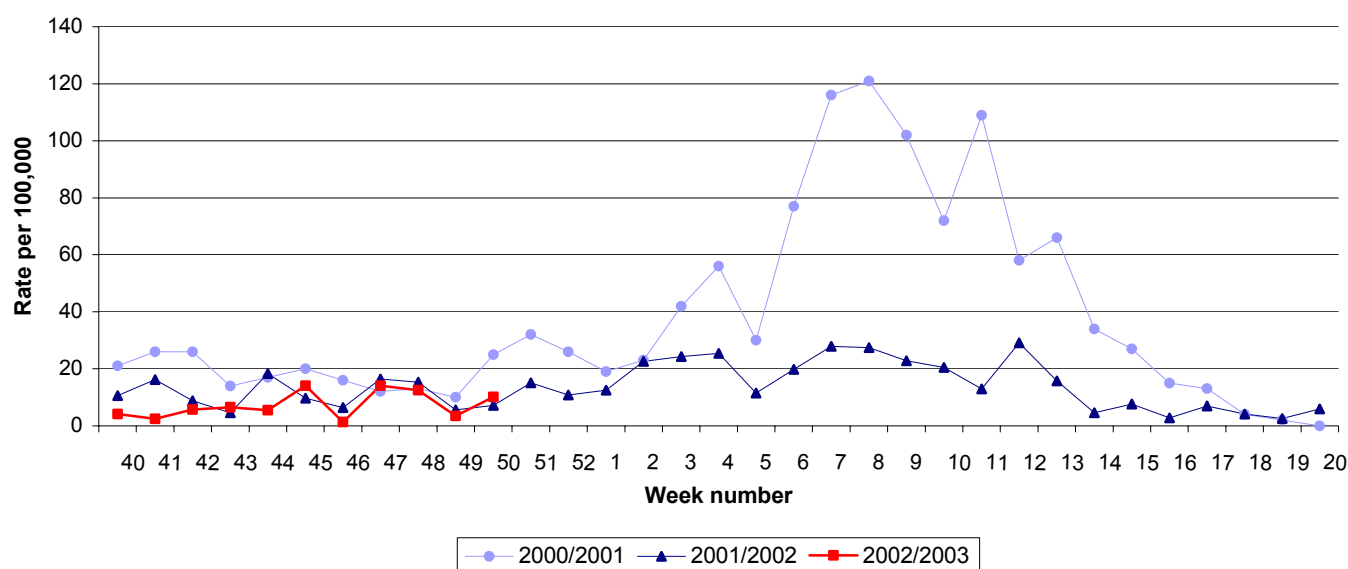


Figure 1: GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Virological data

The National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 5 swabs from sentinel GPs during week 50, all of which were negative for influenza virus (table 1). There have been no positive detections of influenza virus this season. During week 50, 50 respiratory specimens from non-sentinel sources (mainly hospitals) were referred to the NVRL, 27 (54.0%) were positive for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Since the start of the 2002/2003-influenza season, 174 (43.7%) of 398 respiratory specimens were positive for RSV. This is compared to 17 (10.4%) of 163 respiratory specimens positive for RSV during the same period in the 2001/2002 influenza season (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>
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
Total	40	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0

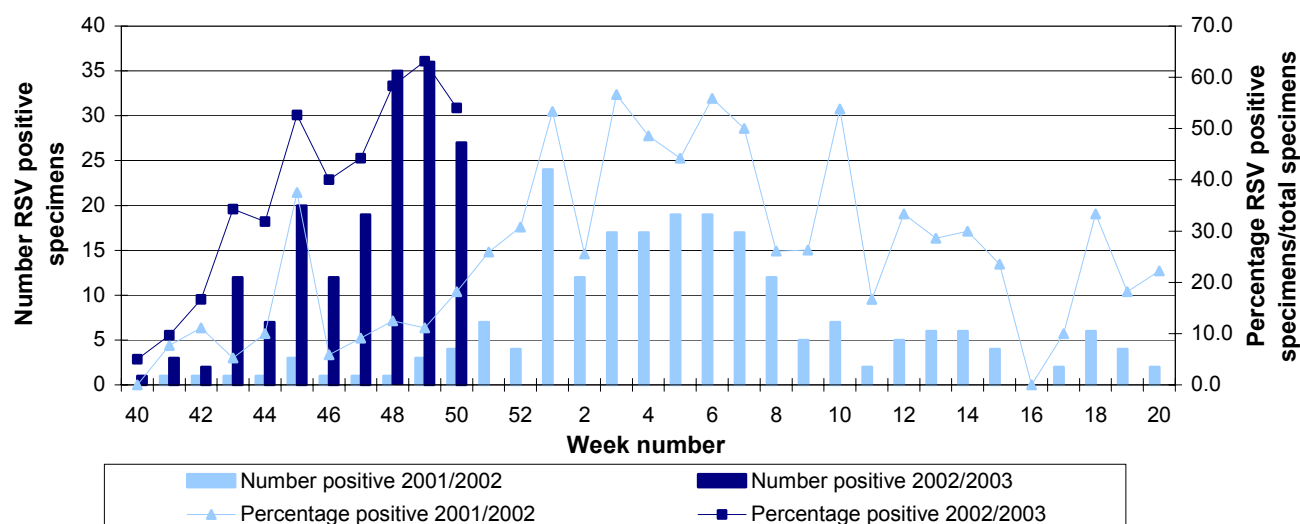


Figure 2: Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Influenza activity in Northern Ireland

During week 50, 22 of 24 sentinel GPs reported in Northern Ireland, representing 8.0% of the population. The combined rate of influenza and ILI has continued to increase from 23.2 per 100,000 population during week 49 to 32.6 per 100,000 in week 50. No influenza viruses have been detected in Northern Ireland to date this season.

Influenza activity in England, Scotland and Wales

In England, GP consultations for ILI increased from 16.5 per 100,000 in week 49 to 20.9 per 100,000 in week 50. In Wales and Scotland, the GP consultation rate for ILI decreased to 0.93 and 21.0 per 100,000 population, respectively. There were no positive detections or isolates of influenza virus reported in the UK during week 50. RCGP consultation rates for acute bronchitis peaked in week 49 and decreased during

week 50 in the 0-4 year age group. Laboratory reports of RSV have continued to increase.

Influenza activity in Europe <http://www.eiss.org/index.cgi>

Seventeen networks reporting to the European Influenza Surveillance Scheme (EISS) reported no influenza activity in week 49, 4 reported sporadic activity and local activity was reported in Spain. Gradual increases in clinical morbidity rates were reported in Spain, Portugal and France. In countries reporting to EISS, 5.7% of sentinel specimens (n=442) were positive for influenza (A or B): 4 influenza A (unsubtyped), 2 A (H3N2) and 19 influenza B. All influenza B viruses characterised to date this season are similar to the vaccine prototype B/Hong Kong/330/2001. Two isolates of influenza A closely related to A/Chile/6416/01(H3N2) were reported in France; this variant is related to the vaccine prototype A/Moscow/10/99(H3N2) (source: GROG). RSV activity has increased in England, France and Scotland. In Belgium and Germany, clinical morbidity rates of acute respiratory infection in younger age groups and RSV activity have increased slightly.

Influenza activity in Canada

During week 49, 12 provinces reported no influenza activity and regions of Ontario reported sporadic and localised activity. Sentinel physicians reported 20 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits, which is within the expected rate for the time of year. Health Canada received 984 reports of laboratory tests for influenza: 14 (1.4%) were positive for influenza A. Seven influenza viruses that have been antigenically characterised were identified as the H1N2 reassortment virus, which is covered by the the current season's vaccine. Other respiratory viruses remain within expected levels for the time of year: RSV (7.6%) of tests positive, adenovirus (3.3% of tests positive) and parainfluenza viruses (5.7%) of tests positive.

Influenza activity in the United States

During week 49, the proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for ILI was 1.3%, less than the national baseline. One state and territorial health department reported widespread influenza activity, 1 reported regional activity, 23 reported sporadic activity and 25 reported no influenza activity. The WHO and NREVSS laboratories reported 819 specimens tested for influenza viruses, of which 24 (2.9%) were positive: 3 A (H1), 1 A (H3N2), 1 A (unsubtyped) and 19 B influenza viruses.

Influenza activity Worldwide

No influenza activity was reported in Argentina, Norway, Denmark, Hungary and Finland during week 49. Sporadic influenza activity was reported in Hong Kong and the Russian Federation. In Hong Kong, 4 influenza B, 1 influenza A (H3N2) and 1 influenza A (unsubtyped) viruses were reported. In the Russian Federation sporadic activity was associated with influenza A (H3N2), A (H1N1) and B viruses.

This report was produced by Dr Lisa Domegan, NDSC.

Nollaig Shona agus Athbhliain faoi mhaise dhaoibh go léir!