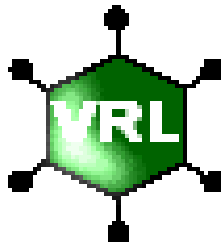


Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



Week 49 2002

Report produced: 12/12/2002

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. There have been no positive detections of influenza virus this season. The percentage of respiratory specimens from non-sentinel sources positive for respiratory syncytial virus has increased further, with 63.2% of specimens positive during week 49.

Clinical data from sentinel GPs

During week 49 (the week ending the 8th of December 2002), 2 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 2.5 per 100,000 population (figure 1). Thirty (90.9%) of the 33 sentinel general practices reported during week 49, with 2 sentinel practices reporting ILI.

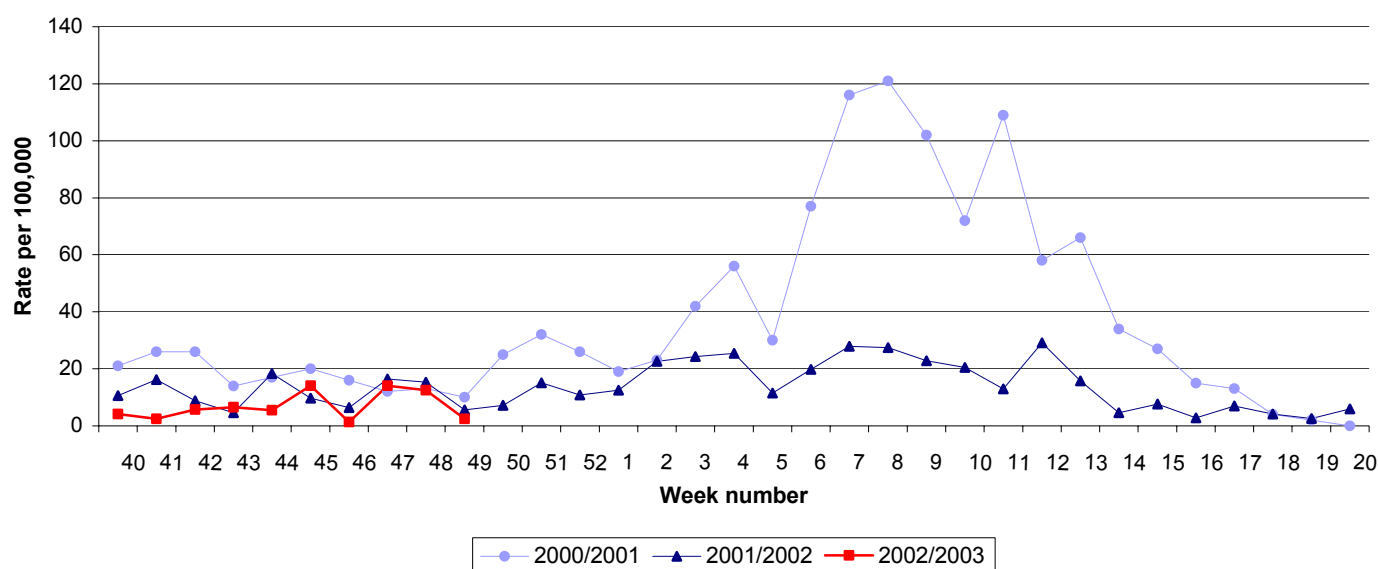


Figure 1: GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Virological data

The National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 3 swabs from sentinel GPs during week 49, which were negative for influenza virus (table 1). There have been no positive detections of influenza virus this season. During week 49, 57 respiratory specimens from non-sentinel sources (mainly hospitals) were referred to the NVRL, one (1.8%) was positive for parainfluenza type 1 and 36 (63.2%) were positive for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). Since the start of the 2002/2003-influenza season, 147 (42.2%) of 348 respiratory specimens were positive for RSV. This is compared to 13 (9.2%) of 141 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

Week number	Total swabs	Positive swabs	Percentage positive	A (unsubtyped)	A (H1N1)	A (H1N2)	A (H3N2)	B
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
Total	35	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0

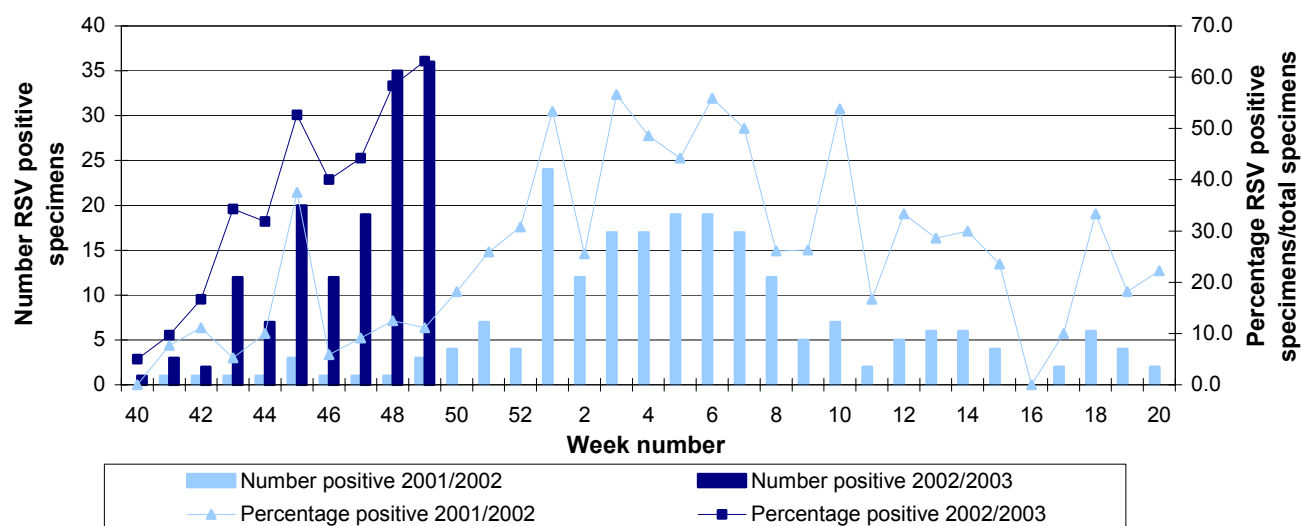


Figure 2: Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Influenza activity in Northern Ireland

During week 49, 23 of 24 sentinel GPs reported in Northern Ireland, representing 8.4% of the population. The combined rate of influenza and ILI was 23.2 per 100,000 population, an increase from the rate of 18.3 per 100,000 during week 48. No influenza viruses have been detected in Northern Ireland to date this season.

Influenza activity in England, Scotland and Wales

GP consultation rates for ILI in England have increased from a rate of 13.2 per 100,000 in week 48 to a rate of 16.5 per 100,000 in week 49. In Wales, the GP consultation rate for ILI in week 49 has decreased to 1.4 per 100,000, whilst in Scotland it has increased to 38 per 100,000. RCGP consultation rates for acute bronchitis remain high in the 0-4 year age group, more than likely due to RSV, as there has been an increase in RSV laboratory reports during weeks 48 and 49. One influenza A (H3) and one influenza B positive specimens were detected by PCR from

specimens referred to the ERNVL through the RCGP community surveillance scheme.

Influenza activity in Europe

During week 48, 20 networks reported no influenza activity and France and Spain reported sporadic activity to the European Influenza Surveillance Scheme (EISS). Of 346 sentinel swabs tested in networks reporting to EISS, 1.4% were positive for influenza (A or B). France, Spain and Portugal reported influenza B as the predominant circulating strain. In France, Germany and Portugal influenza B strains that have been antigenically characterised this season are related to the vaccine strain influenza B Hong Kong/330/2001. RSV activity is increasing in England, Scotland, and France.

Influenza activity in Canada

During week 48, influenza activity in Canada remained low with 11 provinces/territories reporting no influenza activity and parts of Ontario and the Northwest Territories reporting sporadic activity. Sentinel physicians reported 19 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits, which is within the expected rate for this time of year. Health Canada received 802 reports of laboratory tests for influenza: 0.6% (5) were positive for influenza A. Other respiratory viruses circulating in Canada include RSV (6.5% of tests positive), adenovirus (2.1% of tests positive) and parainfluenza viruses (7.6% of tests positive).

Influenza activity in the United States

During week 48, the proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for ILI was 1.4%, less than the national baseline. Three state and territorial health departments reported regional activity, 18 reported sporadic activity and 28 reported no influenza activity. WHO laboratories reported 518 specimens tested for influenza during week 48, 7 (1.3%) of which were positive: one influenza A (H1), 2 influenza A (unsubtyped) and 4 influenza B.

Influenza activity Worldwide

No influenza activity was reported in Iceland or Croatia during week 48. Sporadic influenza activity was reported in Hong Kong, Chile, Argentina, the Russian Federation and India. In Hong Kong, 9 influenza B and 1 influenza A (H3N2) viruses were reported. In Chile sporadic activity was associated with 2 influenza B viruses in Southern Chile. In Argentina, 2 influenza A (unsubtyped) viruses were detected during week 48. In the Russian Federation sporadic activity was associated with influenza B.

This report was produced by Dr Lisa Domegan, NDSC.