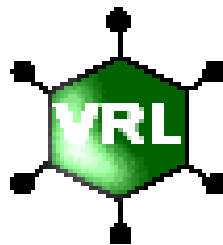


Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



Week 47 2002

Report produced: 28/11/2002

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 number of positive respiratory syncytial virus specimens from non-sentinel sources remains at higher levels than the 2001/2002-influenza season.

Clinical data from sentinel GPs

During week 47 (week ending the 24th of November 2002), 9 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices (GPs), corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 14.1 per 100,000 population (figure 1). Twenty-eight (84.8%) of the 33 sentinel general practices reported during week 47, with 7 sentinel GPs reporting ILI. Data for week 46 has been updated to 1.3 per 100,000.

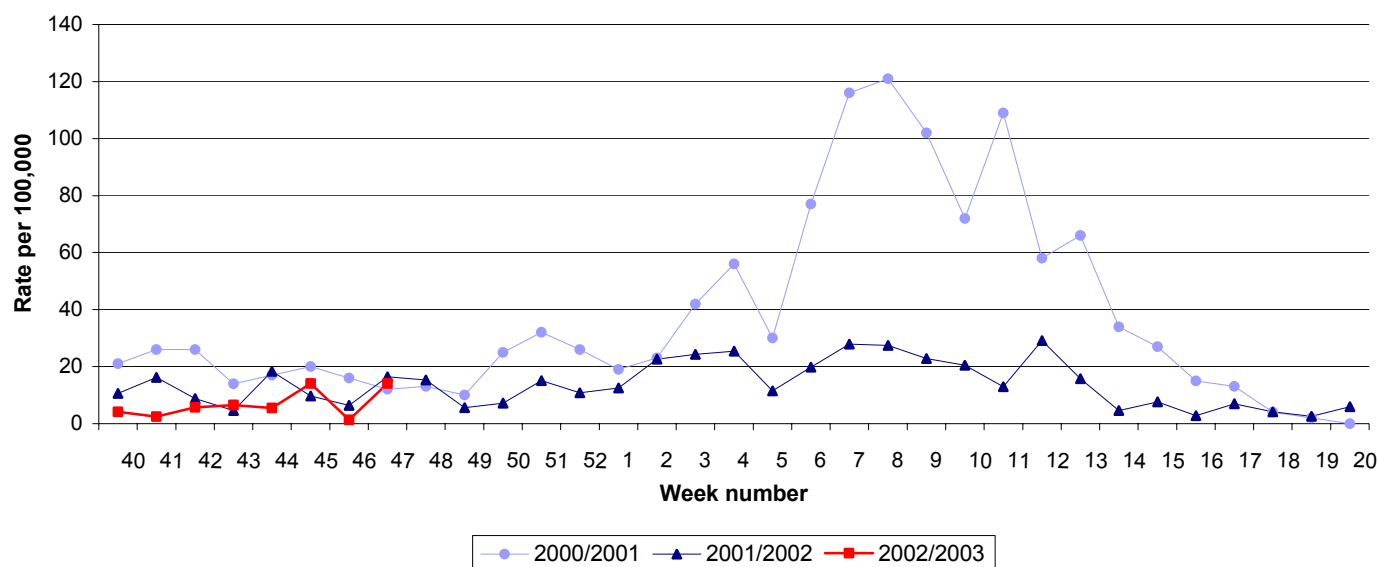


Figure 1: GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Virological data

The National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 3 swabs from sentinel GPs during week 47, which were negative for influenza virus (table 1). There have been no positive detections of influenza virus this season.

The NVRL also tested 43 respiratory specimens from non-sentinel sources (GPs and hospitals) during week 47. No specimens were positive for influenza A or B, parainfluenza virus type 1, 2 or 3 or adenovirus. Nineteen (44.2%) non-sentinel respiratory specimens were positive for respiratory syncytial virus (RSV; figure 2) during week 47. Four (21.1%) cases were less than 1 month old, 13 (68.4%) were aged between 1 and 6 months old and 2 (10.5%) were aged between 7 and 12 months. Fourteen (73.7%) cases were reported from the Eastern Regional Health Authority. Since the start of the 2002/2003-influenza season, 76 (32.9%) of 231 respiratory specimens were positive for RSV. This is compared to 9 (8.5%) of 106 respiratory specimens positive for RSV during the same period in the 2001/2002 influenza season.

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
Total	26	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0

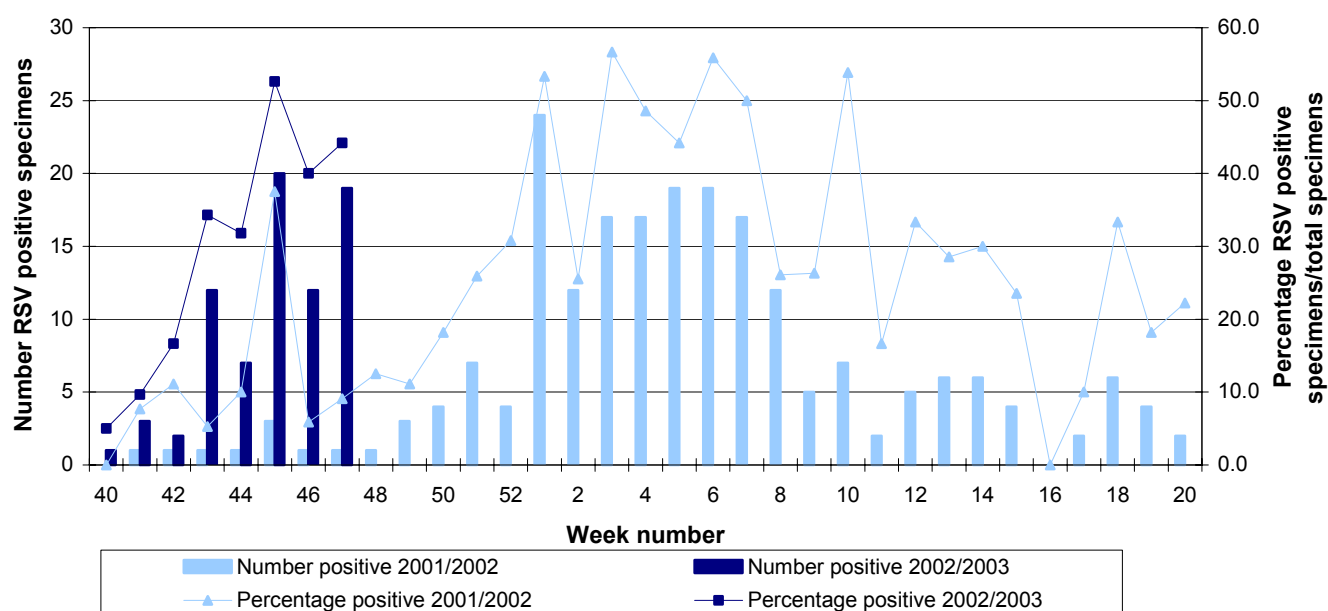


Figure 2: Number and percentage of non-sentinel RSV positive specimens detected during the 2001/2002 and 2002/2003 influenza seasons.

Influenza activity 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, there have been no indications of influenza activity in any of the health boards.

Influenza activity in Northern Ireland

During week 47 in Northern Ireland, 23 of the 24 sentinel GPs reported. The combined influenza and ILI rate was 25.4 per 100,000 population for week 47. No swabs were submitted from sentinel GPs during week 46 and there were no positive swabs identified from non-sentinel or routine laboratory testing.

Influenza activity in England, Scotland and Wales

During week 47, in England, the GP consultation rate for ILI increased slightly to 13.7 per 100,000. In Wales and Scotland, the GP consultation rates for ILI also increased slightly during week 47 to 1.4 and 21.0 per 100,000 population, respectively. There have been no positive detections of influenza virus from specimens received from community surveillance or specimens referred to the ERNVL in week 47.

Influenza activity in Europe

During week 46, 21 networks reporting to the European Influenza Surveillance Scheme (EISS) reported no influenza activity. One swab from sentinel GPs in Spain was positive for influenza A (H3N2) and sentinel swabs were positive for influenza B in the Czech Republic and Portugal during week 46.

Influenza activity in Canada

During week 46, 3 provinces/territories reported sporadic influenza activity and 11 reported no activity. Sentinel physicians reported 12 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits, which is the expected rate of the time of year. Health Canada received 800 reports of laboratory tests for influenza, 2 were positive for influenza. Other respiratory viruses circulating in the Canadian population remain at moderate levels for RSV (4.5% of tests positive), parainfluenza viruses (6.0% of tests positive) and adenovirus (1.8% of tests positive).

Influenza activity in the United States

During week 46, the proportion of patient visits to sentinel physicians was 1.1%, which is less than the national baseline of 1.9%. One state and territorial health department reported regional influenza activity, 18 reported sporadic activity, and 30 reported no influenza activity. The WHO and NREVSS laboratories have tested 8103 specimens for influenza viruses and 24 (0.3%) were positive (13 influenza A (H1) and 11 influenza B viruses).

Influenza activity Worldwide

During week 46, no influenza activity was reported in Iceland. The Russian Federation, Argentina, Hong Kong and French Guiana all reported sporadic activity. In Argentina, a positive influenza A isolate was characterised as A/New Caledonia/20/99 (H1N1). In Hong Kong sporadic activity was associated with 2 influenza B and 3 influenza A (H3N2) isolates.

This report was produced by Dr Lisa Domegan, NDSC.