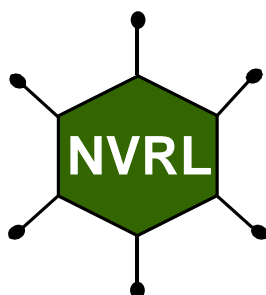


# Weekly Influenza Surveillance Report



**Week 43 2003**

**Report produced: 30/10/2003**

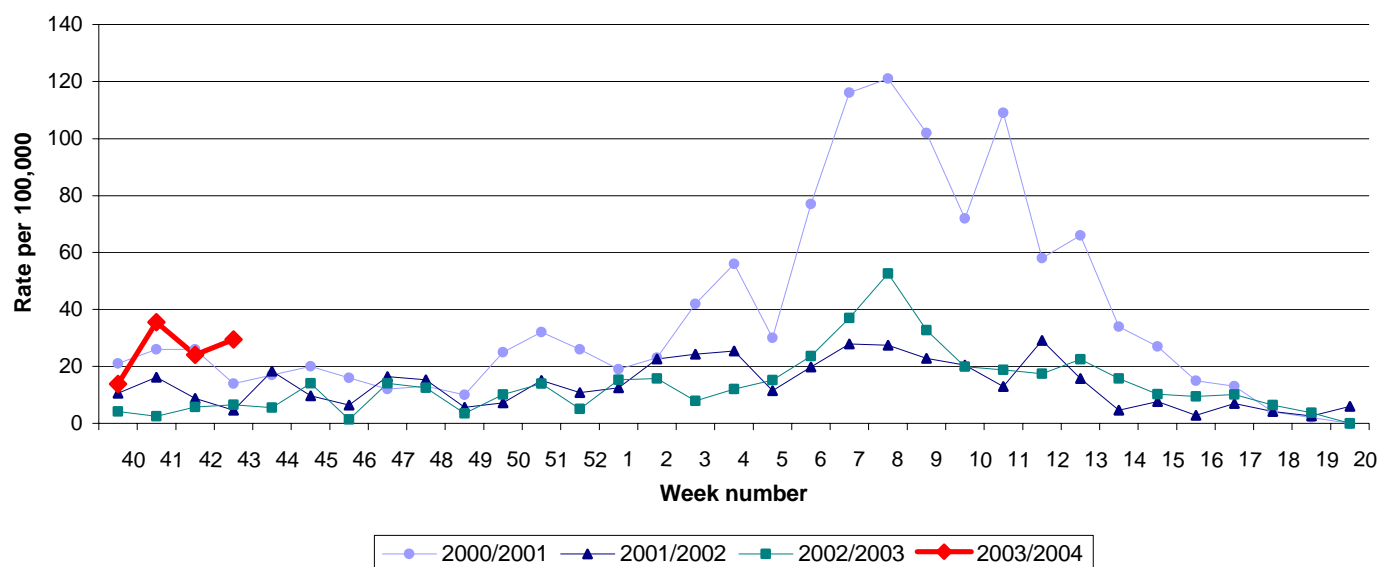
**This report is produced in collaboration with the Departments of Public Health**

## Summary

GP consultations rates for influenza-like illness increased during week 43 in Ireland. Influenza activity levels are higher than previously recorded for this time of year (the influenza surveillance scheme began in October 2000). Influenza A is now circulating in Ireland. Six influenza A viruses were detected during week 43. Although, laboratory confirmations of influenza virus started earlier this season than previous seasons, it is still too early to predict whether this early activity will be sustained.

## Clinical data

During week 43 2003 (the week ending the 26<sup>th</sup> of October 2003), 20 influenza-like illness (ILI) cases were reported from sentinel general practices, corresponding to an ILI consultation rate of 29.5 per 100,000 population, increasing from 24.1 per 100,000 in week 42. Twenty-six of the 34 (76.5%) sentinel practices reported during week 43, with 10 reporting ILI (figure 1). The majority of ILI cases (18/20) were reported from sentinel GPs in the east, southeastern and southern parts of the country. Two ILI cases were aged between 5 and 14 years of age, 17 cases were in the 15-64 year age group and 1 case was aged 65 years or older. ILI rates per 100,000 have reached the highest recorded levels for week 43, since the influenza sentinel surveillance scheme began in October 2000.



**Figure 1:** GP consultation rate for influenza-like illness per 100,000 population by report week, during the 2000/2001, 2001/2002, 2002/2003 & 2003/2004-influenza seasons.

## Virological data

During week 43, the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) received 10 swabs from sentinel GPs (table 1). Four swabs were positive for influenza A (unsubtyped); all were aged between 15 and 64 years of age. Five of the 7 influenza A viruses from week 42 have been subtyped as influenza A (H3N2). The NVRL also tested 30 respiratory specimens mainly from hospitals during week 43, 2 were positive for influenza A (unsubtyped), 1 for respiratory syncytial virus, 1 for parainfluenza virus

type 1 and 1 for parainfluenza virus type 3. Influenza positive cases were detected in 4 health boards during week 43.

**Table 1:** Total number of sentinel swabs tested for influenza by week and positive results by type, subtype and report week for the 2003/2004-influenza season

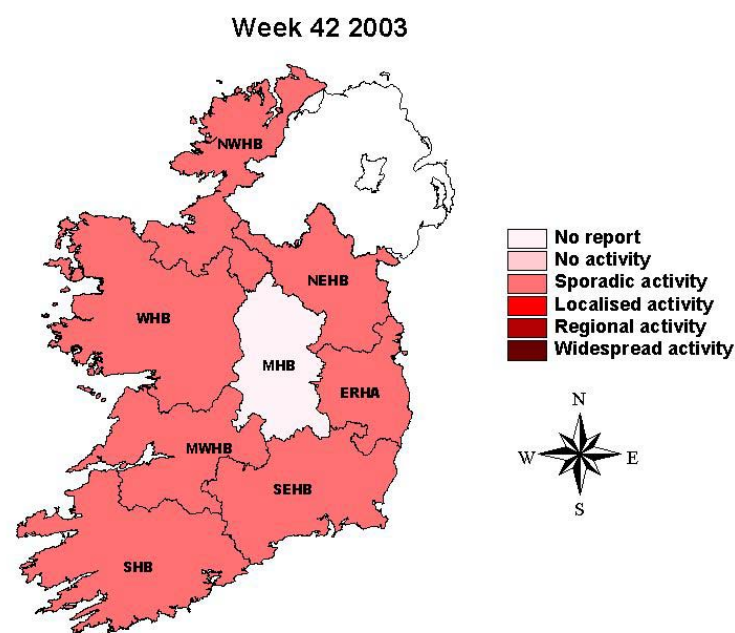
| Week number  | Total swabs | Positive swabs | Percentage positive | Influenza A (unsubtyped) | Influenza A (H1) | Influenza A (H3N2) | Influenza B |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------|-------------|
| 40           | 9           | 0              | 0.0                 | 0                        | 0                | 0                  | 0           |
| 41           | 12          | 4              | 33.3                | 0                        | 0                | 4                  | 0           |
| 42           | 14          | 7              | 50.0                | 2                        | 0                | 5                  | 0           |
| 43           | 10          | 4              | 40.0                | 4                        | 0                | 0                  | 0           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>45</b>   | <b>15</b>      | <b>33.3</b>         | <b>6</b>                 | <b>0</b>         | <b>9</b>           | <b>0</b>    |

### School outbreak reports

No school outbreaks associated with influenza-like illness were reported to NDSC during week 43 2003.

### 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, and/or sentinel hospital admissions data, and/or sentinel school absenteeism data. During week 42, 7 health boards reported sporadic influenza activity (figure 2). Hospital admissions for respiratory tract infections increased in one sentinel hospital in the ERHA during week 43.



**Figure 2:** Map of influenza activity by health board during week 42 2003.

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

In Northern Ireland during week 43, 21 of 23 sentinel general practices reported a GP consultation rate for combined influenza and ILI of 74.4 per 100,000 population, an increase from 65.6 per 100,000 in week 42. These are the highest rates recorded for this time of year since the scheme began in October 2000. Two sentinel specimens were positive for influenza A (H3) during week 43. <http://www.cdscni.org.uk/>

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

In England and Scotland, GP consultation rates for ILI increased to 24.6 and 29.0 per 100,000, respectively, these rates are within baseline levels but are continuing to increase. In Wales, the GP consultation rates for ILI decreased slightly to 7.4 per 100,000. Reports of influenza A viruses are increasing in the UK population. Of the influenza virus isolations typed this season in England, 3 were confirmed as A/Fujian411/2002(H3N2)-like and one as A/Panama/2007/99(H3N2)-like. A sudden death of a young child from a respiratory infection was reported in England during week 42. Influenza A (H3N2) Fujian-like virus was detected at post mortem.

[http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics\\_az/influenza/fluactivity0304.htm](http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/influenza/fluactivity0304.htm)

### **Influenza activity in Europe**

Sporadic influenza activity was reported in England, France, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Portugal, Scotland and Spain during week 42. In the 11 other networks reporting to the European Influenza Surveillance Scheme (EISS) no influenza activity was reported. The number of ILI consultations per 100,000 population in Ireland, Northern Ireland and Spain was above the levels usually seen at this time of the year.

The total number of respiratory specimens collected by sentinel GPs in Europe during week 42 was 244; 14.3% were influenza positive [22 A (H3N2) and 13 influenza A (unsubtyped)]. Northern Ireland, Portugal and Spain reported influenza A (H3N2) as the predominant virus circulating in their country. France, Ireland and Norway reported influenza A and 12 countries reported no predominant virus. All of the strain characterisations reported to EISS for the 2003/2004 season were influenza A (H3N2)/Fujian/411/2002-like viruses: 3 in England, 3 in Ireland and 1 in Northern Ireland. <http://www.eiss.org>

### **Influenza activity in Canada**

During week 42 in Canada, sporadic influenza activity was reported in parts of Alberta and localised activity in parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Sentinel physicians reported 15 cases of ILI per 1000 patient visits in week 42, which is below baseline rates for week 42. During week 42, Health Canada received 1023 reports of laboratory tests for influenza, 87 (8.5%) were positive for influenza A. Influenza outbreaks were reported in 2 schools and one long term care facility in week 42. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgsp/fluwatch/index.html>. In Edmonton, increases in emergency room admissions were reported in October, with influenza activity increasing earlier than normal. <http://www.promedmail.org>

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

During week 42, one state health department reported widespread influenza activity, 5 reported sporadic activity and 40 states reported no influenza activity. The proportion of patient visits to sentinel providers for ILI was less than the national baseline of

2.5%. WHO and NREVSS laboratories reported 520 specimens tested for influenza viruses; 11 were positive for influenza A (H3N2) and 4 for influenza A (unsubtyped).  
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluvirus.htm>

### **Influenza activity Worldwide**

No influenza activity was reported in Argentina in week 42. Sporadic activity was reported in Hong Kong (6 A unsubtyped, 10 A H3N2 and 4 B), Australia (3 A unsubtyped), Thailand (5 B) and Chile (2 A unsubtyped). The Russian Federation reported low levels of ILI slowly increasing all over the country. One influenza A (unsubtyped) and 1 A (H3N2) viruses were reported in Israel during week 42.  
<http://rhone.b3e.jussieu.fr/flunet/www/>

### **Northern Hemisphere influenza vaccine for the 2003/2004**

On February the 28<sup>th</sup> 2003, WHO published a recommendation on the composition of influenza vaccines for use in the 2003-2004 Northern Hemisphere influenza season.

- A/New Caledonia/20/99(H1N1)-like virus
- A/Moscow/10/99(H3N2)-like virus\*
- B/Hong Kong/330/2001-like virus\*\*

\*The widely used vaccine strain is A/Panama/2007/99

\*\* Currently used vaccine strains include B/Shandong/7/97, B/Hong Kong/330/2001, B/Hong Kong/1434/2002

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/vaccinerecommendations1/en/>

<http://www.emea.eu.int>

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