**Influenza**

**Weekly Surveillance Bulletin**

**Week 7 (10 February – 16 February 2020)**

### Community Activity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GP consultation rates for 'flu/flu-like-illness' (‘flu/FLI’) (10 Feb – 16 Feb 2020)**

**Circulating strains this season to date**

- **Flu AH3**: 5%
- **Flu A(H1N1) 2009**: 6%
- **Flu A (Untyped)**: 7%
- **Flu B**: 82%

**Number of hospital cases with confirmed flu (10 Feb – 16 Feb 2020)**

- **Flu AH3**
- **Flu A(H1N1) 2009**
- **Flu A (Untyped)**
- **Flu B**
- **All flu tests**

**Respiratory Outbreaks this Week (10 Feb – 16 Feb 2020)**

To date there have been ten flu outbreaks; five in a Care Home setting, four in a Hospital setting and one other

---

**Vaccine Uptake (1 October - 31 January 2020)**

- **47.1%**: All 2 to 4 year olds*
- **75.1%**: Primary school children offered and vaccinated so far*
- **50.4%**: All pregnant woman
- **56.7%**: All individuals under 65 years with a chronic medical condition
- **73.3%**: All individuals 65 years and over
- **41.1%**: Frontline health care workers employed by a Trust
- **22.3%**: Frontline social care workers employed by a Trust

* 2-4 year old programme started mid to late October 2019, primary school programme stopped for 2 weeks in November

To date there have been 62 admissions to ICU with confirmed influenza
GP consultation rates for ‘flu/flu-like-illness’ (‘flu/FLI’)

The baseline MEM threshold for Northern Ireland is 14.7 per 100,000 population for 2019-20. Low activity is 14.7 to <23.9, moderate activity 23.9 to <73.9, high activity 73.9 to <121.7 and very high activity is >121.7.

Comment

The GP flu/FLI consultation rate during week 7, 2020 was 5.7 per 100,000 population, a slight decrease from week 6 (5.9 per 100,000). This is lower than the same time last year (14.5 per 100,000). Activity remains below the baseline threshold for Northern Ireland (<14.7 per 100,000) (Figure 1).

Flu/FLI consultation rates decreased in week 7 compared to week 6 in the 15-44 and 65+ year age groups, while increasing in the 45-64 year age group. Rates remained constant in the 0-4 and 5-14 year age groups. Flu/FLI consultation rate was highest in those aged 45-64 years in week 7 (8.0 per 100,000). Rates are lower in all age groups compared to the same period last year (week 7, 2018-19).
Figure 2. Northern Ireland Out of Hours (OOH) consultation rates for ‘flu/FLI’ 2018/19 – 2019/20

Comment

The flu/FLI consultation rate in Primary Care Out-of-Hours (OOH) Centres during week 7, 2020 was 3.8 per 100,000 population, this is the same as week 6. This is lower than the same time last year (7.6 per 100,000).

In week 7 the percentage of calls to an OOH Centre due to flu/FLI was 0.7%. This is similar to week 6 (0.8%) and is lower than the same period last year (1.3%).

Consultation rates increased in week 7 compared to week 6 in the 0-4, 45-64 and 65+ year age groups, while decreasing in the 5-14 and 15-44 year age groups. Consultation rates were highest in those aged 15-44 years in week 7 (5.4 per 100,000 population). Rates are lower in all age groups compared to the same period last year (week 7, 2018-19).
Virology

Figure 3. Weekly number of flu laboratory reports from week 40, 2018 with weekly GP consultation rates for ‘flu/FLI’
Note

Additional virology testing has been undertaken at local laboratories. This bulletin includes this data along with the data from the Regional Virology Laboratory.

All virology data are provisional. The virology figures for previous weeks included in this or future bulletins are updated with data from laboratory returns received after the production of the last bulletin. The current bulletin reflects the most up-to-date information available. Sentinel and non-sentinel samples are tested for influenza and for RSV. Cumulative reports of influenza A (untyped) may vary from week to week as these may be subsequently typed in later reports.
Comment

In week 7, 2020, 19 samples were positive for flu (nine Flu A(H1N1), three Flu A(untyped) and seven Flu B) from 364 submitted for testing in laboratories across Northern Ireland.

Positivity decreased in week 7 (5%) compared to week 6 (13%). Positivity is lower than this time last year (34%).

One of the three samples submitted by the GP based sentinel scheme was positive for flu (one Flu A(H1N1), 33% positivity) (Figures 3 and 4; Tables 1, 2 and 3).
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Figure 5. Number of samples tested for RSV and proportion positive, 2018/19 – 2019/20, all sources

Comment

In week 7, three samples were positive for RSV, with positivity (1%) lower than the same period last season (3%).

The majority (59%) of cases since week 40 have occurred in children aged 0-4 years (Table 2 and Figure 5).
Hospital Surveillance (Non-ICU/HDU)

![Graph showing weekly number of hospitalisations testing positive for influenza by week of specimen, 2018/19 – 2019/20.]

**Figure 6.** Weekly number of hospitalisations testing positive for influenza by week of specimen, 2018/19 – 2019/20

**Comment**

In week 7, 2020, 17 hospitalisations tested positive for flu (eight Flu A(H1N1), two Flu A(untyped) and seven Flu B). This is a decrease from week 6 and lower than the same time last year (Figure 6).

Of note, not all positive specimens may have been reported as this point.
ICU/HDU Surveillance

Figure 7. Confirmed ICU/HDU influenza cases by week of specimen, 2018/19 – 2019/20

Comment

Data are collected on laboratory confirmed influenza patients and deaths in critical care (level 2 and level 3). There were no new admissions to ICU with confirmed influenza reported to the Public Health Agency (PHA) during week 7. So far this season there has been 62 admissions to ICU with confirmed influenza (51 Flu A(H3), five Flu A(H1N1), four Flu A(untyped), one Flu B and one Flu A&B) reported to the PHA (Figure 7).

Of the 62 admissions to ICU, 50% (n=31) were male. The ages ranged from <1 year to 86 years, with a median age of 59 years and a mean age of 50 years old. 74% (n=46) were classed as being in a vaccine risk group. Vaccination status was known for 74% (n=46); 12 were vaccinated this season. To date there have been 10 deaths reported among ICU admissions; seven of whom were in a flu vaccine eligible group and <5 had been vaccinated this season.
Outbreaks

During week 7, 2020 there were no confirmed respiratory outbreaks reported to the PHA Health Protection acute response duty room. To date, there has been a total of ten confirmed respiratory outbreaks reported, five in a Care Home setting, four in a Hospital setting and one other (nine Flu A (untyped) and one Flu B).

Mortality

The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) provide the weekly number of respiratory associated deaths and its proportion of all-cause registered deaths.

Respiratory associated deaths include those that are attributable to influenza, other respiratory infections or their complications. This includes “bronchiolitis, bronchitis, influenza or pneumonia” keywords recorded on the death certificate.

Figure 8. Weekly registered deaths and proportion of all deaths with keywords, by week of registration from week 40, 2018
Comment

In week 7, 2020, 94 respiratory associated deaths out of 306 all-cause deaths were reported (31%). These trends are broadly the same as the same period last year (Figure 8).

EuroMOMO

There was no excess all-cause mortality reported in Northern Ireland in week 7, 2020. Excess all-cause mortality was reported for four weeks in Northern Ireland to date this season (weeks 50, 51, 2 and 3). This excess mortality was mostly reported in those aged 65+ years.

Please note this data is provisional due to the time delay in registration; numbers may vary from week to week.

Information on mortality from all causes is provided for management purpose from Public Health England. Excess mortality is defined as a statistically significant increase in the number of deaths reported over the expected number for a given point in time. This calculation allows for a weekly variation in the number of deaths registered and takes account of deaths registered retrospectively. Information is used to provide an early warning to the health service of any seasonal increases in mortality to allow further investigation of excess detections.

There is no single cause of ‘additional’ deaths in the winter months but they are often attributed in part to cold weather (e.g. directly from falls, fractures, road traffic accidents), through worsening of chronic medical conditions e.g. heart and respiratory complaints and through respiratory infections including influenza.

For more information on EuroMOMO and interactive maps of reporting across the season please see http://www.euromomo.eu/index.html
Influenza Vaccine Uptake

Every year the seasonal flu vaccine programme officially commences on 1st October and is delivered by primary care, the Trust school nursing service (in school) and the Trust health and social care worker (HSCW) flu campaign. This year, the children’s programme has been impacted on by temporary delays in the manufacturing of the flu vaccine given to children (see table 4 for details).

Uptake for primary school children is presented differently and is the proportion of children offered the vaccine between the start of the programme and 31st January and also received it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. Influenza vaccine uptake rates, 2019-20 and 2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivered by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All 2 to 4 year olds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All pregnant women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All individuals under 65 years with a chronic medical condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All individuals 65 years and over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of primary school children offered the vaccine and vaccinated to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of all Frontline health care workers employed by a Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of all Frontline social care workers employed by a Trust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This figure also includes a small number vaccinated by their GP.
Further Information and International/National Updates

Further information
Further information on influenza is available at the following websites:

- PHA Seasonal Influenza
- nidirect Flu Vaccination
- PHE Seasonal Influenza Guidance - Data and Analysis
- WHO Influenza
- ECDC Seasonal Influenza

National updates
Detailed influenza weekly reports can be found at the following websites:

- Scotland: HPS Weekly National Seasonal Respiratory Report
- Wales: Public Health Wales Influenza Surveillance Report
- Republic of Ireland: HPSC Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Reports

International updates

- Europe (ECDC and WHO): Flu News Europe
- Worldwide (WHO): WHO Influenza Surveillance Monitoring
- USA (CDC): Weekly U.S. Influenza Surveillance Report
Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our thanks to all those who assist us in the surveillance of influenza in particular the sentinel GPs, Out-of-Hours Centres, Apollo Medical, Regional Virus Laboratory, Critical Care Network for Northern Ireland and Public Health England. Their work is greatly appreciated and their support vital in the production of this bulletin. The author also acknowledges the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) and the General Register Office Northern Ireland (GRONI) for the supply of data used in this publication. NISRA and GRONI do not accept responsibility for any alteration or manipulation of data once it has been provided.

For further information on the Enhanced Surveillance of Influenza in Northern Ireland scheme or to be added to the circulation list for this bulletin please contact:

Dr Mark O'Doherty
Senior Epidemiological Scientist
Public Health Agency

Ms Emma Dickson
Epidemiological Scientist
Public Health Agency

Mr Jeffrey Doogan
Surveillance Information Officer
Public Health Agency

Dr Jillian Johnston
Consultant in Health Protection
Public Health Agency

Email: flusurveillance@hscni.net