INFLUENZA WATCH

January 13, 2012 Surveillance Week 1 Volume 6, Issue 6

Flu Surveillance and Related Disease Updates for Los Angeles County

2012 Begins as 2011 Ended, with Minimal Local Flu Activity

Respiratory virus surveillance in Los Angeles County continues to show low levels of activity: only 1% and 6% of respiratory samples tested positive for influenza and RSV versus 11% and 45%, respectively, this time last year. In contrast, rhino/enterovirus (~7%) and human metapneumovirus (hMPV) (11%) are more prevalent at this time (Figure 1). Despite low overall respiratory activity, three influenza deaths have been confirmed: one pediatric case (flu B) and two elderly men (flu A, flu B). Flu vaccinations are still available; because flu can be expected to continue to circulate into the spring it is not too late to vaccinate.

Table 1. LA County Surveillance Summary (2011-2012) Surveillance Week 1

LA County Surveillance Summary	Week 1	2011-2012 Season YTD
Positive Flu Tests / Total Tests (Percent Positive Flu Tests)	5 / 401 (1.2%)	55 / 7,061 (0.8%)
Percent Flu A / B	60/40	60 / 40
Positive RSV Tests / Total Tests (Percent Positive RSV Tests)	20 / 350 (5.7%)	108 / 5,211 (2.1%)
Community Respiratory Outbreaks	0	2
Flu Deaths, Confirmed (Pediatric Deaths, Confirmed)	*	3 (1)

* Due to the lag time in reporting and confirmation of cause, weekly flu death data is delayed.

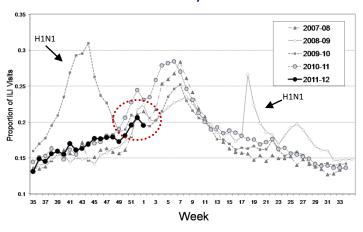
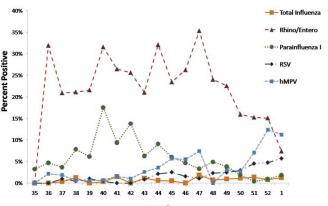
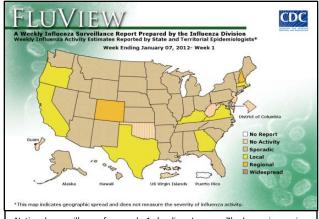


Figure 2. Influenza-like Illness ED Visits in LA County (2007-2012) Percent Positive by MMWR Week

Figure 1. Respiratory Viruses in LA County (2011-2012) Percent Positive by MMWR Week







National surveillance for week 1 (ending January 7) shows increasing influenza activity. The second highest level ("Regional") was reported by two states (Colorado and New Hampshire). California's level just increased to "Local," this level also was reported by six other states (Georgia, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia).

Google Helps Predict Local Influenza Trends

Google Flu Trends (GFT) allows users to estimate and track the spread of influenza-like illness (ILI) worldwide. The tool (at <u>http://www.google.org/flutrends</u>) uses aggregated Google search data to estimate ILI activity around the world. How does the tool work? Google found a close relationship between how many people search for flu-related topics and how many people actually have ILI. While not every person who searches for "flu" actually has influenza, a pattern emerges when all flu-related search queries are added together. In this new study (at http://tinyurl.com/7mh5764), researchers compared GFT with traditional influenza surveillance systems at a local level and found that flu search queries tend to increase as laboratory confirmed influenza increases, demonstrating that GFT may provide trends on the local prevalence of influenza.

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