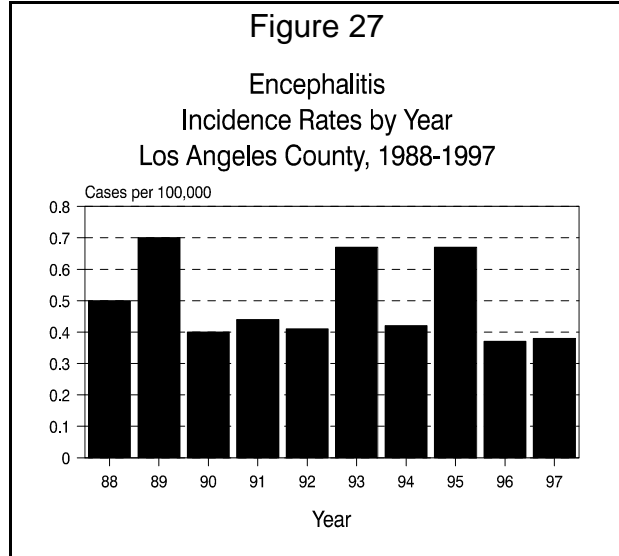


ENCEPHALITIS

CRUDE DATA	
Number of Cases	34
Annual Incidence	
LA County	0.38
California	N/A
United States	N/A
Age at Onset	
Mean	36
Median	33
Range	0 - 89 yrs
Case Fatality	
LA County	38% ^b
United States	N/A



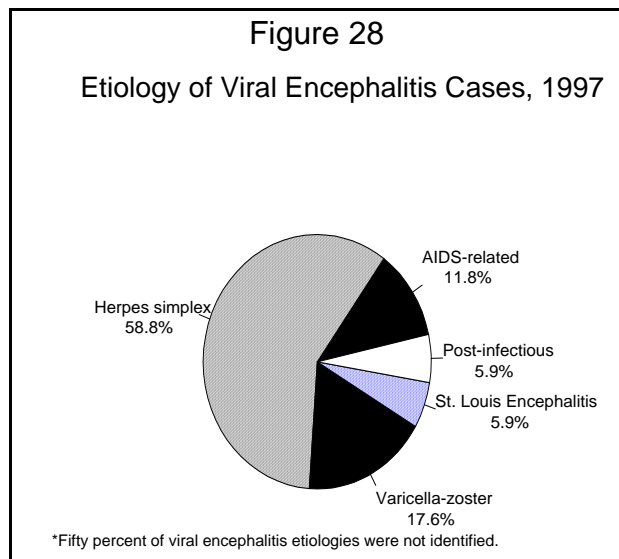
^a Cases per 100,000 population.
^b Excludes AIDS-associated cases.

ETIOLOGY

Encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain, can result from infection with a number of different viruses, especially the arboviruses.

DISEASE ABSTRACT

The 1997 incidence of viral encephalitis remains unchanged from 1996. A seasonal increase occurred in late spring and early summer, consistent with the previous five-year average. The highest age-specific incidence rate (0.86 cases per 100,000 population) was observed in adults over 65 years of age. The male-to-female rate ratio was 1:1. Blacks had the highest crude incidence rates (0.49 cases per 100,000 population), followed by Whites (0.43 cases per 100,000), Hispanics (0.32 cases per 100,000), and Asians (0.17 cases per 100,000). Cases of encephalitis occurred throughout Los Angeles County, with South, Bellflower, and San Antonio Health Districts having the highest rates (1.20, 0.83, and 0.70 cases per 100,000 population, respectively).



The one reported case of St. Louis encephalitis occurred in an 83-year-old woman who reported

exposure to mosquito bites while sitting on her porch in the evenings in Pomona.

COMMENTS

Despite the fact that the Public Health Laboratory provides free testing of clinical samples, few are submitted, and the etiologic agent for most cases is not identified. In 1997, the etiology was unknown for 50% of reported cases.

Of particular public health concern in LAC are the arthropod-borne (arboviral) encephalitides, especially those due to St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) and Western equine encephalitis (WEE) viruses. Since 1985, sporadic cases of SLE have been reported, following an outbreak of 16 cases in 1984. The potential for another SLE outbreak exists, as the sporadic cases in previous years and identification of SLE in sentinel animal population indicate that the virus is now endemic in LAC. The annual mosquito-borne encephalitis surveillance program consists of surveillance for equine cases of WEE, monitoring of mosquito populations, laboratory testing of mosquitoes for WEE and SLE viruses, and twice monthly testing of sentinel chicken flocks for SLE and WEE. Elimination of standing water and proper maintenance of ponds and swimming pools decrease the available sites for hatching and maturation of mosquito larvae. The State of California Mosquito Abatement Districts monitor and control populations of these insects.