

Influenza Watch – San Diego County, California

2003-04 Influenza Season Summary

The 2003/2004 influenza season was moderately severe in San Diego and across the United States. Unlike recent years, the 2003-04 influenza season began early with laboratory detection starting in November, and then peaking in late December 2003. Laboratory detection of influenza declined rapidly at the beginning of 2004 and stayed minimal throughout the remainder of the season (March 31).

Viral isolates sent to the Public Health Laboratory were confirmed and subtyped, and then sent to the State Viral and Rickettsial Disease Laboratory for antigenic characterization. The predominant circulating strain was the influenza A/Fujian/4111/2002 (H3N2) virus, which differed antigenically from the A (H3N2) component of the 2003-4 influenza vaccine (A/Panama/2007/99).

Sentinel surveillance among selected emergency departments showed higher levels of influenza-like-illness (ILI) earlier in the influenza season when compared to previous years during the same timeframe (see Figure 1). After the first of the year in 2004, percent of influenza-like-illness visits to sentinel emergency departments was lower than expected levels.

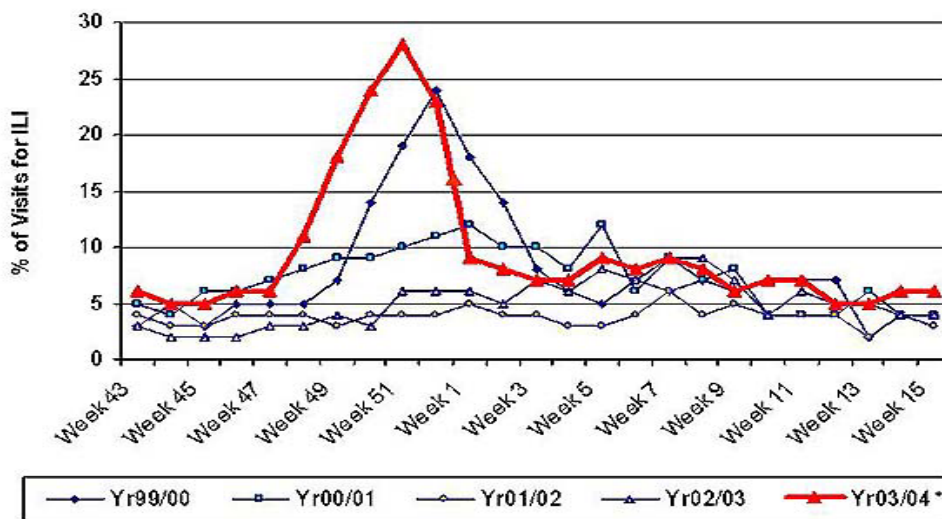


Figure 1. Percent of Influenza-Like-Illness Visits to Sentinel Emergency Departments in San Diego County During Influenza Season (Weeks 43 – 15), 1999/00 – 2003/04

* - For the 2003/2004 series, Week 53 is represented as a midpoint between Week 52 and Week 1

Influenza Reporting

In light of recent cases of avian influenza in Asia and the frequency of international travel, influenza testing and surveillance continues on a year-round basis.

Physicians and laboratories are encouraged to report positive influenza detections to the Public Health Laboratory by phone (619-692-8500) or fax (619-692-8558).

Request for Provider Participation

The Offices of Community Epidemiology, Immunization, and the Public Health Lab, with the assistance of our surveillance partners throughout San Diego County, are conducting Influenza Surveillance. Information is collected weekly regarding visits compatible with "flu like illness" reported from several emergency departments throughout the County. In addition, sentinel physicians and hospitals are submitting specimens from patients with suspect illness for viral culture. If you would like to participate with us in influenza surveillance efforts, please call us at 619-515-6632.

Additional Resources

California State influenza information: <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dc/dc/VRDL/html/FLU/Fluintro.htm>

United States influenza information: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/weekly.htm>