

Influenza

Since the start of the 2013 influenza season in South Africa, the number of specimens submitted for respiratory virus testing through the Viral Watch programme (VW) has continued to increase, with >100 specimens per week being submitted since the last week of May. As at 6 June 2013, influenza has been detected in 240 patients i.e. A(H1N1) pdm09 in 229 patients, in all nine provinces; A (H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) from a patient in Gauteng Province (GP); A(H3N2) in four patients in GP; and influenza B from seven patients in

KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape provinces. The influenza season is considered to have started when the detection rate rises above 10% and stays there for two weeks or more. The detection rate from the VW programme rose to 17.2% in week 17 (week starting 22 April) and continued to increase to >50% by week 21 (starting 20 May) – Figure. In addition other respiratory viruses were detected in 170 patients negative for influenza. The majority (91/170, 53%) of these were rhinovirus, followed by adenovirus (39/170, 23%).

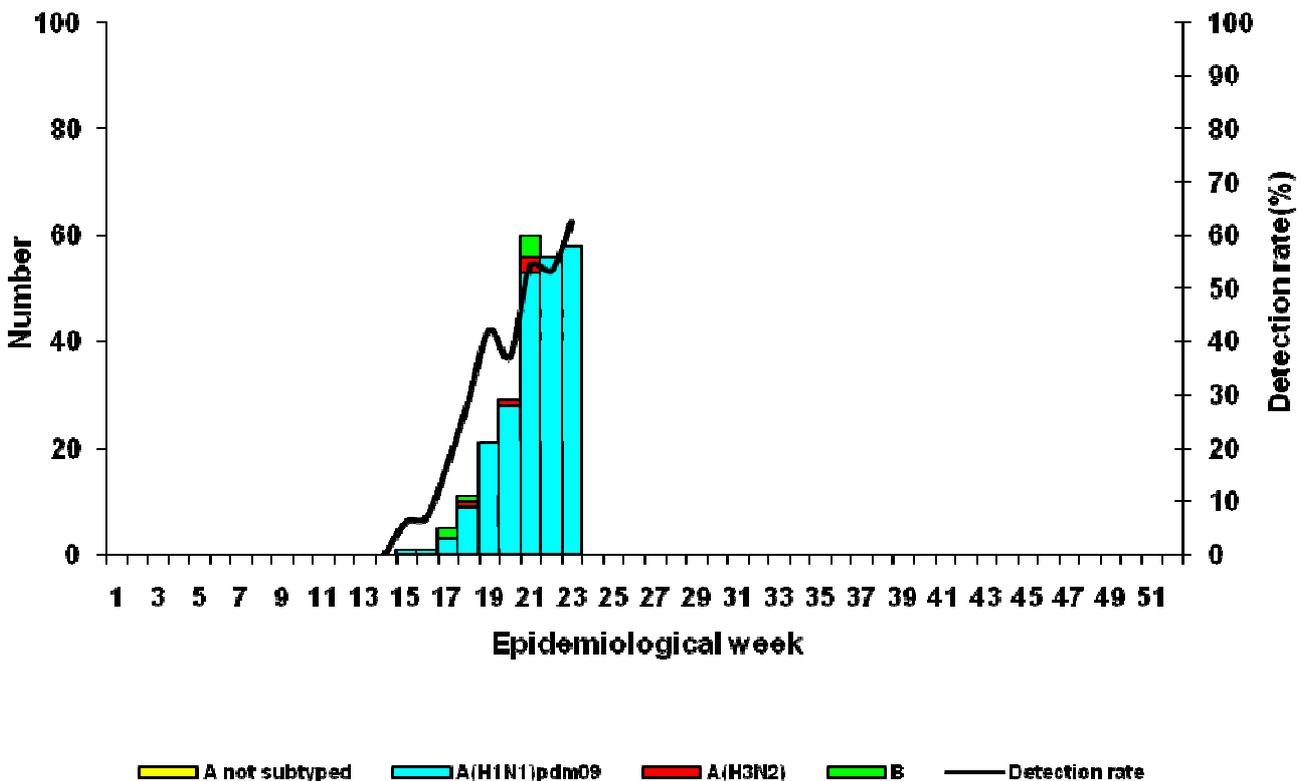


Figure. Number of positive samples by influenza types and subtypes and influenza detection rate by week, Viral Watch Programme, 2013

During this time period 1 358 specimens from patients admitted with severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) at the five SARI surveillance sites have been tested for influenza. Of these, 3% (36/1 358) were positive for influenza; influenza cases have been reported in 3 of the 5 sentinel sites to date. Influenza A not subtyped was detected in one patient, influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 in 32 patients, influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N3) in one, and influenza B in two patients. In addition, 1 201 other respiratory viruses were detected in the specimens of 878 patients; rhinovirus accounted for the majority (443/1 201, 44%) followed by RSV (307/1 021, 30%).

Clinicians should have a high index of suspicion for influenza in patients admitted with pneumonia. Influenza antiviral treatment (oseltamivir) should be considered for all patients with pneumonia, especially patients at increased risk of severe disease. Detailed guidelines for the prevention and treatment of influenza are available at http://www.nicd.ac.za/assets/files/Healthcare%20Workers%20Handbook%20on%20Influenza%20in%20SA%20-10%20April%202013final%20_2_.pdf

Source: Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis, NICD-NHLS.