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Seasonal influenza

The 2013 influenza season has started in South Africa. The influenza season is considered to have started when the detection rate is sustained above 10% for at least two weeks. The detection rate from the Viral Watch (VW) programme (influenza-like illness) rose to 17.2% in week 17 (week starting 22 April) and to 32.3% and 36% in the subsequent two weeks.

The number of specimens submitted for respiratory virus testing to the VW programme has increased from an average of three specimens per week in the first three months of the year to an average of 25 specimens per week. During April 2013, influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 was detected in nine patients (from Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Western Cape provinces); influenza A (H1N1)pdm09 and A(H3N2) co-infection was detected in a patient from Gauteng Province; influenza B from two patients in KwaZulu-Natal Province and one in Western Cape Province. During May 2013 to date, influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 has been detected in 13 patients from seven provinces. This brings the total number of influenza detections

in the VW programme this year to 26 i.e. 22 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 1 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 & A(H3N2) co-infection, and 3 influenza B virus.

For 2013 to date, 1 151 specimens from patients admitted with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) at the five SARI surveillance sites have been tested for influenza. Of these, ten were positive i.e. one influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 & A(H3N2) co-infection, one influenza B, two influenza A untyped and 6 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 (Table).

Although the influenza season has started, healthcare workers are reminded that it is not too late to be vaccinated for influenza, and they should continue to encourage patients (in particular those at risk for severe disease) to take up influenza vaccine.

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

Table. Cumulative number of identified influenza types and subtypes and total number of samples collected by hospital, 2013, Severe Acute Respiratory Illness surveillance programme

Hospital	Influenza A untyped	Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09	Influenza A (H3N2)	Influenza B	Total samples
Chris Hani Baragwanath (GP)	1	3	0	0	343
Edendale (KZN)	1	2	0	0	325
Klerksdorp-Tshepong (NWP)	1	1	0	1	333
Mapulaneng (MP)	0	0	0	0	71
Matikwane (MP)	0	0	0	0	79
Total:	3	6	0	1	1 151