

2 **SEASONAL DISEASES**

a **Influenza**

As at 13 May 2014, 97 specimens have been received from Viral Watch sites since 01 January 2014 compared to 170 over the same time period in 2013. Influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 virus has been detected in five, influenza A(H3N2) in four, and influenza B virus in two patients. Several of the 11 patients were known to have travelled in the northern hemisphere shortly before the onset of symptoms. In addition, 23 specimens have been received from patients at a point of entry into South Africa; influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 was detected in two and influenza B in eight of these patients.

From 01 January to 13 May 2014, 552 patients hospitalised with severe acute respiratory illness were tested at four sentinel sites. Although none of these patients tested positive for influenza, 30% (168/552), 28% (154/552) and 9% (47/552) were positive for respiratory syncytial virus, rhinovirus and adenovirus, respectively.

The 2014 influenza season has not started as yet. The start of the annual influenza season has been defined as the week during which the influenza detection rate has risen above 10% and is sustained for two or more

consecutive weeks. To date the influenza detection rate from viral watch sites has sporadically risen above 10% but not been sustained for \geq two weeks. Over the past 30 years, the average week of influenza season onset has been the last week of May; the range of season onset is from the last week of April to the first week of July.

Influenza vaccination is currently available at public health clinics and private pharmacies. Clinicians are reminded that they should vaccinate individuals in the groups that are targeted for influenza vaccination. Recommendations on target groups, dosages and contraindications for the 2014 influenza vaccine, and influenza antiviral treatment are available in the Healthcare Workers Handbook on influenza 2014, accessed at: [http://nicd.ac.za/assets/files/Healthcare%20Workers%20Handbook%20on%20Influenza%20in%20SA%2012%20May%202014\(1\).pdf](http://nicd.ac.za/assets/files/Healthcare%20Workers%20Handbook%20on%20Influenza%20in%20SA%2012%20May%202014(1).pdf)

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