Influenza Update N° 367

11 May 2020, based on data up to 26 April 2020

Information in this report is categorized by influenza transmission zones, which are geographical groups of countries, areas or territories with similar influenza transmission patterns. For more information on influenza transmission zones, see: https://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/Influenza_Transmission_Zones20180914.pdf

The current influenza surveillance data should be interpreted with caution as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic might have influenced to varying extents health seeking behaviours, staffing/routines in sentinel sites, as well as testing priorities and capacities in Member States. The various hygiene and physical distancing measures implemented by Member States to reduce SARS-CoV2 virus transmission might also have played a role in interrupting influenza virus transmission.

Globally, influenza activity appeared to be at lower levels than expected for this time of the year. In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere a sharp decline of influenza activity was observed in recent weeks while in the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, the influenza season has not started yet.

In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, influenza activity was low overall. A marked overall increase in excess all-cause mortality was seen across the countries of the EuroMOMO network.

In the Caribbean and Central American countries, severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) activity continued to be reported though decreased in most of the countries. Influenza virus detections remained low.
Influenza update

11 May 2020

▪ In tropical South American countries, influenza detections were low.
▪ In tropical Africa, there were no or low influenza detections across most reporting countries.
▪ In Southern Asia, influenza like illness (ILI) and SARI activity decreased in Bhutan and Nepal.
▪ In South East Asia, low influenza detections were reported in Thailand.
▪ In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels overall.
▪ Worldwide, seasonal influenza A viruses accounted for the majority of detections.
▪ National Influenza Centres (NICs) and other national influenza laboratories from 71 countries, areas or territories reported data to FluNet for the time period from 13 April 2020 to 26 April 2020 (data as of 2020-05-08 04:29:35 UTC). The WHO GISRS laboratories tested more than 150652 specimens during that time period. 325 were positive for influenza viruses, of which 189 (58.2%) were typed as influenza A and 136 (41.8%) as influenza B. Of the sub-typed influenza A viruses, 57 (58.2%) were influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and 41 (41.8%) were influenza A(H3N2). Of the characterized B viruses, 1 (14.3%) belonged to the B-Yamagata lineage and 6 (85.7%) to the B-Victoria lineage.
▪ WHO encourages the testing of routine influenza surveillance samples from sentinel and non-sentinel sources for COVID-19 where resources are available and invites all countries/areas/territories to report this information to routine, established regional and global platforms. (See the Operational considerations for COVID-19 surveillance using GISRS guidance)

For more detailed information, see the Influenza reports from WHO Regional Offices:
▪ WHO Region of the Americas (AMRO): www.paho.org/influenzareports
▪ WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMRO): http://www.emro.who.int/health-topics/influenza/situation-update.html
▪ WHO European Region (EURO): www.flunewseurope.org/
▪ WHO Western Pacific Region (WPRO): www.wpro.who.int/emerging_diseases/Influenza/en/
▪ EuroMOMO Bulletin: https://www.euromomo.eu

Countries in the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere
▪ In the temperate zone of the northern hemisphere, influenza activity was low overall.
▪ In the countries of North America, influenza activity indicators have decreased to very low levels. In the United States of America, the percentage of deaths attributed to pneumonia and influenza remained above the epidemic threshold.
▪ In Europe, influenza activity was low across all reporting countries. Pooled mortality estimates from the EuroMOMO network continued to show a marked overall increase in excess all-cause mortality which appeared to be driven by a very substantial excess mortality in some of the European participating countries and coinciding with the current COVID-19 global pandemic. This excess mortality was primarily found in the age group of 65 years and above, followed by the age group of 15-64 years.
- In Central Asia, no influenza detections were reported.
- In Northern Africa, there were no influenza updates for this reporting period.
- In Western Asia, there were no or low influenza detections across reporting countries.
- In East Asia, influenza illness indicators and influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels across all countries.

**Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in northern hemisphere**

Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 08/05/2020

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**Countries in the tropical zone**

**Tropical countries of Central America, the Caribbean and South America**
- In the Caribbean and Central American countries, influenza activity was low across reporting countries. Elevated SARI activity continued to be reported in Jamaica while SARI activity decreased in Costa Rica and Haiti. In Mexico, influenza activity returned to inter-seasonal levels, with low detections of influenza A and B viruses.
- In the tropical countries of South America, there were no to low influenza detections across the countries in the sub-region.

**Tropical Africa**
- In tropical Africa, there were no or low influenza detections across most reporting countries. Influenza detections of predominantly influenza A(H1N1)pdm09 and B viruses continued to reported in Mozambique.ILI and SARI activity decreased in Mali.
Tropical Asia

- In Southern Asia, no influenza detections were reported across reporting countries. ILI and SARI activity continued to decrease in Bhutan and Nepal.
- In South East Asia, low influenza detections were reported in Thailand. Lao People’s Democratic Republic reported decreased ILI and SARI activity and no detections of influenza viruses.

Countries in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere

- In the temperate zones of the southern hemisphere, influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- In parts of Australia, where the data was available, emergency department visits for respiratory symptoms decreased to levels expected for this time of year. ILI and influenza activity remained at inter-seasonal levels.
- In South Africa, there were no influenza virus detections during this reporting period.
- In temperate South America, there were no or low influenza virus detections reported across the countries in the sub-region. SARI levels continued to decrease in Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The ILI rate remained above the baseline threshold in Paraguay.

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype in the southern hemisphere

Data source: FluNet (www.who.int/flunet). Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS)
Data generated on 08/05/2020
Sources of data
The Global Influenza Programme monitors influenza activity worldwide and publishes an update every two weeks. The updates are based on available epidemiological and virological data sources, including FluNet (reported by the WHO Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System), FluID (epidemiological data reported by national focal points) and influenza reports from WHO Regional Offices and Member States. Completeness can vary among updates due to availability and quality of data available at the time when the update is developed.

Seasonal influenza reviews: A review of the 2019 influenza season in the southern hemisphere, was published in January 2020 and can be found here:
https://extranet.who.int/iris/restricted/bitstream/handle/10665/330368/WER9501-02-eng-fre.pdf
Epidemiological Influenza updates:
http://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/latest_update_GIP_surveillance
Epidemiological Influenza updates archives 2015:
http://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/GIP_surveillance_2015_archives
Virological surveillance updates: http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/updates/summaryreport
Virological surveillance updates archives: http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/updates/

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