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Health Update

Respiratory Virus Surveillance Report—Mar. 31, 2009

Influenza A activity has peaked; Influenza B now predominates

Influenza A and B have been circulating in the Philadelphia area since late January. Over the last 3 weeks, reports of influenza in Philadelphia and throughout Pennsylvania have decreased. Much of the decrease locally can be attributed to sharp declines of influenza A activity, which was mainly influenza A(H1N1) (most being resistant to oseltamivir). Influenza B activity is also declining, but now accounts for nearly 80% of circulating influenza in Philadelphia. For this season, Influenza B activity has been significantly higher compared to average values from the previous 3 seasons, while the opposite has been true for influenza A (figure).

The national picture is similar as the relative proportion of influenza B has recently increased despite declines of overall influenza activity, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). CDC has antigenically characterized 807 influenza isolates. All of the influenza A specimens (510 A[H1N1] and 86 A [H3N2]) appear to be related to the vaccine components

for this season. However, of the 211 influenza B isolates, only 21% appear to be related to the influenza B strain included in the vaccine.

Influenza vaccine is still available for those individuals who wish to be immunized. Children 6 months to 8 years of age, who received influenza vaccine for the first time this year, should complete the two-dose schedule during this season. If a child does not receive the recommended second dose within the same season, the two-dose influenza series will need to be restarted next flu season.

In addition to influenza, RSV, rhinoviruses, parainfluenza viruses (all types) and adenoviruses are also circulating in our area at relatively low levels (data not shown). RSV activity has nearly reached pre-seasonal baseline levels.

For more information regarding current local and state respiratory virus surveillance, please visit <https://hip.phila.gov/xv/> (click on the “Surveillance” section) and <http://www.health.state.pa.us/flu>.

