Influenza Update

May 31, 2016

Local
This is the last seasonal influenza report that we will publish for the 2015-16 flu season. A season summary follows. We are grateful to our community laboratories, clinics, hospitals and long term care facilities and schools for reporting throughout the season.

Influenza continues to circulate at low levels. For local laboratories reporting during week 20 (May 15-21), 11% of 116 specimens tested were positive for influenza. Most positive tests were influenza B. In May, there were no influenza outbreaks reported, and no schools have reported absenteeism over 10%. One influenza death was reported during week 20. A total of 15 influenza-associated deaths have been reported this season (since Oct. 4).

State
Influenza is characterized as sporadic in Washington. Sixty six lab-confirmed influenza deaths have been reported for the 2015-2016 season to date, including one pediatric death. During week 20, World Health Organization/National Respiratory and Enteric Virus Surveillance System (WHO/NREVSS) collaborating laboratories in Washington tested 313 specimens, with eight specimens positive for influenza. During week 20, the proportion of outpatient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) was 0.4 percent, below the baseline of 1.1 percent.

National
Flu activity has peaked nationally for this season and is winding down. During CDC Week 20, only two states continue to report widespread flu activity. Influenza B viruses have been most common in recent weeks, however H1N1 viruses have been predominant overall this season. CDC continues to recommend influenza vaccination as long as influenza viruses are circulating. CDC also recommends that patients suspected of having influenza who are at high-risk of flu complications or who are very sick with flu-like symptoms should receive prompt treatment with influenza antiviral drugs without waiting for confirmatory testing. Between October 1, 2015 and April 30, 2016, 8,666 laboratory-confirmed have been reported through FluSurv-NET, a population-based surveillance network for laboratory-confirmed influenza-associated hospitalizations. This translates to a cumulative overall rate of 31.3 hospitalizations per 100,000 people in the United States. This is significantly lower than the hospitalization rate at this time last season (64.1 per 100,000), which was an H3N2 predominant season. During the last H1N1 predominant season (2013-2014), the cumulative hospitalization rate was 35.
2015-16 Summary:
The season was relatively mild and arrived late.

- Requests for influenza testing in Pierce County started increasing after CDC week 1 and peaked at week 6.
- Influenza B was dominant early in the season in Washington and Pierce County, which is very unusual.
- Nationally, 2009 influenza A-H1N1 was the dominant seasonal influenza representing 80% of influenza A subtypes. Influenza B accounted for 30% of isolates in the nation that were subtyped.
- In Pierce County, 15 to 30 influenza associated hospitalizations per week were reported from CDC week 7 through 14. The highest weekly number of hospitalizations was reported during CDC week 12.
- Numbers of hospitalization were much lower this season, compared with last season.
- Persons in their 60s were the most frequently hospitalized.
- Fifteen influenza associated deaths were reported this season, vs. 25 reported last season.