Virus Watch

Week ending 01st March 2020

Key Points

Influenza and influenza-like illnesses (ILI)

- **Summary:** Indicators of influenza activity were similar to levels usually reported during this time of year in WA.
- ILI activity at sentinel GPs remained low in the previous weeks.
- ILI presentations and admissions at sentinel EDs were relatively stable in the past week but presentations were higher than expected for this time of year.
- PathWest influenza detections and test percent positivity were at levels usually reported at this time of year.
- Influenza A accounted for (68%) influenza cases at PathWest in the past week, comprising 36% A/H1 and 32% A/H3. Influenza B accounted for 32% of cases.
- Non-influenza activity in increased in the past week mainly from an increase in rhinovirus, possibly due to increased demand for COVID-19 virus testing.

Gastroenteritis

- The rate of gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel GPs and sentinel EDs remained in the range of levels normally reported at this time of year.
- PathWest laboratory detections of norovirus were low in the past week, and rotavirus notifications remained at low levels.

Other vaccine-preventable diseases

- **Shingles and chickenpox:** There were no chickenpox presentations reported by WA ASPREN GPs this week and the shingles presentation rate was similar to baseline levels. The number of chickenpox presentations to sentinel EDs in the past week were lower than baseline levels and shingles presentations were higher.
- **Measles:** No measles cases were notified in the past week.
- **Mumps:** No mumps cases was notified in the past week.
- **Rubella:** No rubella cases notified in the past week.
- **Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD):** One IMD case was notified in the past week.

Other diseases

- **Coronavirus COVID-19:** A third confirmed case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in a WA. Case acquired infection overseas. See [webpage](http://www.health.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_Infectious-disease-data/Virus-WAtch) for further information.


Virus WAtch is a weekly electronic publication by the Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD) and key collaborators. It provides a brief summary of General Practice and Hospital Emergency Department sentinel surveillance data on influenza-like illness, gastroenteritis and varicella-zoster disease, together with relevant laboratory information, to alert health care workers in WA to important circulating viruses. All figures and data were accurate at time of publication, but subject to change. The data collections used to create this publication include:

- Sentinel General Practice data collected by WA members of the Australian Sentinel Practices Research Network (ASPREN)
- Emergency Department data provided by the Emergency Department Information System (EDIS), which currently incorporates data from the following hospitals: Fiona Stanley Hospital, Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital, Royal Perth Hospital, Perth Children’s Hospital, King Edward Memorial Hospital, St John of God Midland, Bunbury Hospital, Armadale Hospital, Joondalup Health Campus, and Rockingham General Hospital.
- Notification data derived from disease notifications received by CDCD, WA Department of Health from medical providers and public or private laboratories in WA. These data are updated routinely to include admission status for all public and public/private hospitals in WA and hospitalisation data are included in the report during the influenza season.
- Viral laboratory data obtained from PathWest laboratories at QEII Medical Centre, as well as via notification data sent by all WA laboratories to CDCD, WA Department of Health.

*these samples were tested using a rapid testing method that does not determine the influenza subtype (i.e influenza A/H3N2 or A/H1N1).
Influenza and influenza-like illnesses

The number of routine PathWest influenza detections decreased in the past week and there were no samples submitted for influenza testing by sentinel GPs.

The rate of ILI presentations to sentinel GPs in the past week was in the mid-range of levels usually reported during this time of year.
The following is a summary of current Emergency Department Sentinel Surveillance (EDSS) data for respiratory viral presentations.

Respiratory viral presentations and admissions to sentinel EDs remained relatively stable in the past week.

The number of respiratory viral presentations to sentinel EDs remained stable in the past week and is above levels usually reported during this time of year.
Influenza notifications reported to the Department of Health in the past week remained similar to the seasonal threshold.

The graph is a summary of all influenza notifications received by the DoH, Western Australia to the end of the current reporting week, for which cases had date of symptom onset or specimen collection between 23/02/2020 and 01/03/2020. The seasonal threshold defines a value above which may indicate epidemic seasonal influenza activity. The threshold value is calculated based on analysis of seasonal influenza data from the past four years.

The percentage of specimens positive for influenza virus at PathWest was at levels usually reported at this time of year. Of 383 specimens submitted, 19 (5%) tested positive in the past week.
Nineteen positive samples were reported by PathWest in the past week which included 13 influenza A and six influenza B. Of the 13 influenza A samples, seven were A/H1N1 and six were A/H3N2.

Overall non-influenza activity increased in the past week, mainly due to an increase in rhinovirus. This rhinovirus increase may be due to patients who would not normally be tested for rhinovirus but are now being tested as part of a screen that includes COVID-19.
The graph is a summary of all WA samples positive for a common respiratory virus other than influenza reported at PathWest.

**Gastroenteritis**

*Australian Sentinel Practices Research Network - GP surveillance*

*rate of gastroenteritis per 1000 consultations, 2016 to 2020*

The rate of gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel GPs increased in the last week and is within the mid-range of levels normally reported at this time of year.

**ED gastroenteritis presentations**

Gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel EDs in the past week were similar to baseline levels and admissions were above baseline levels.
This graph is a summary of current EDIS data for gastroenteritis presentations and admissions. Baseline levels for gastroenteritis presentations and admissions were calculated using the mean of weekly EDIS data from week 1, 2014 to week 52, 2018.

The number of gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel EDs increased in the past week and is in the mid range of values normally reported at this time of year.

**Viral rashes**

**GP varicella-zoster virus presentations**

There were no chickenpox presentation reported by WA ASPREN GPs this week and shingles presentation rates were similar to the baseline.

Baseline levels for chickenpox and shingles presentations to WA ASPREN GPs per thousand consultations were calculated using the mean of weekly WA ASPREN data from week 1, 2014 to week 52, 2018.
The following is a summary of current Emergency Department sentinel surveillance (EDSS) data for varicella-zoster virus presentations.

ED varicella-zoster virus presentations

The number of chickenpox presentations to sentinel EDs in the past week were lower than baseline levels and shingles presentations were higher.

Baseline levels for varicella-zoster virus presentations were calculated using the mean of weekly EDIS data from week 1, 2014 to week 52, 2018.

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