Virus WAtch
Week ending 15th March 2020

Key Points

Influenza and influenza-like illnesses (ILI)

- **Summary**: Indicators of influenza activity remain at interseasonal levels.
- ILI activity at sentinel GPs remained low this week. Of the three samples sent for testing by sentinel GPs none were positive for influenza or COVID-19.
- ILI presentations at sentinel EDs were higher than expected for this time of year, possibly due to community concern over COVID-19.
- Influenza notifications and PathWest test percent positivity was lower than levels usually reported at this time of year.
- Influenza A accounted for 90% influenza cases at PathWest in the past week, comprising 62% A/H1, 21% A/H3 and 8% untyped. Influenza B accounted for 10% of cases.
- Non-influenza activity remained high this week, 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**: Chickenpox and shingles presentations reported by WA sentinel GPs and EDs this week were below baseline levels.
- **Measles**: No measles cases were notified in the past week.
- **Mumps**: No mumps case were notified in the past week.
- **Rubella**: No rubella cases were notified in the past week.
- **Invasive meningococcal disease (IMD)**: No IMD cases were notified in the past week.

Other diseases

- **Coronavirus COVID-19**: As of 18 March 2020 there have been 35 COVID-19 cases confirmed in WA this week. See webpage for further information.
Influenza and influenza-like illnesses

The number of routine PathWest influenza detections fell this week and none of the three samples submitted for influenza testing by sentinel GPs tested positive for influenza or COVID-19.

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.

The number of respiratory viral presentations to sentinel EDs remained high this week and is above levels usually reported during this time of year.

*The graph is a summary of presentations at Emergency Department Sentinel Surveillance (EDSS) sites using the ICD codes B34.9 and J06.9 which are consistent with a clinical presentation of a viral illness. This data may differ from that presented in the Winter Respiratory Illness Report provided by the Information and System Performance Directorate.
Influenza notifications reported to the Department of Health in the past week remained around 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 09/03/2020 and 15/03/2020. 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 below levels usually reported at this time of year. This is likely due to increased respiratory illness testing in recent weeks. Of 1330 specimens submitted, 39 (3%) tested positive for influenza in the past week. The graph is a summary of all WA samples reported by PathWest, excluding samples referred by other private laboratories for influenza subtyping.
Thirty nine positive samples were reported by PathWest in the past week which included 35 influenza A and 4 influenza B. Of the 35 influenza A samples, 24 were A/H1N1, 8 were A/H3N2 and 3 were untyped*.

The graph is a summary of all WA samples positive for influenza reported at PathWest, excluding samples referred by other private laboratories for influenza subtyping. * These samples were tested using a rapid testing method that does not determine the influenza subtype (i.e. influenza A/H3N2 or A/H1N1).

Overall non-influenza activity remained high week. This may be due to patients who would not normally be tested for respiratory viruses 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.
The rate of gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel GPs remains in the lower range of levels normally reported at this time of year.

Gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel EDs in the past week were below baseline levels, whilst admissions remained 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, 2015 to week 52, 2019.
The number of gastroenteritis presentations to sentinel EDs remains in the mid range of values normally reported at this time of year.

Viral rashes

The chickenpox and shingles presentations reported by WA ASPREN GPs this week were below baseline level.

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week ending</th>
<th>No. of chickenpox presentations</th>
<th>No. of shingles presentations</th>
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<td>8/03/20</td>
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<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15/03/20</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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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