



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY *Messenger* Public Health Laboratory

December 2014

Influenza surveillance

Influenza has arrived in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County as evidenced by detection of influenza A and B virus by the Public Health Laboratory (PHL). Using reverse-transcription real-time PCR developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the SLO PHL has identified multiple influenza A H3N2 infections. In light of reports from the CDC that many influenza A H3N2 viruses analyzed this season have mutated from prior seasons, we are likely seeing the “drifted” H3N2 strain locally. This is not unexpected but may portend an increased rate of influenza A infection among those who have received the vaccine. Analyses of H3N2 strains show three distinct genetic groups. Only one group – accounting for about a third of cases – matches well with the H3N2 vaccine strain. The other two groups show diminished response to the vaccine. The CDC reports that over 90% of influenza virus infections are due to A type virus while B type infections account for the remainder.

All influenza viruses tested against neuraminidase inhibitors this season have shown susceptibility to both oseltamivir and zanamivir. Drifted or mutationally-altered influenza A (H3N2) viruses are expected to circulate widely this season and treatment guidance issued by the CDC emphasizes early and frequent use of these influenza antiviral medications.

The SLO Public Health Laboratory is soliciting submission of specimens (nasopharyngeal swab in M4 Viral transport medium) for seasonal influenza surveillance using Influenza RT-PCR test (# 50000) at no charge.

Requested Surveillance Specimens include:

Hospitals: from patients who are hospitalized with influenza-like illness (ILI) and/or placed in an ICU – regardless of rapid test result.

Community Health Care Providers: from patients with ILI and a positive rapid influenza test.

If an outbreak of influenza-like illness occurs in an institutional setting, contact Communicable Disease at the SLO Public Health Department: 805-781-5500.

Enterovirus 68 Epidemic – continued surveillance

The SLO PHL continues testing for the virus using the newly introduced real-time Enterovirus PCR test (# 6300). To date, no EV68 has been detected in SLO County patients.

Other Respiratory Viruses

This year has also seen increased activity for other respiratory viruses including Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and Human metapneumovirus – causing illness primarily in children; and parainfluenza viruses 1, 2 and 3. These viruses and others can be detected by the Respiratory Virus Panel (RVP) PCR test (# 6040).

Please contact the SLO PHL 805-781-5507 if instruction is needed for submission for any of these tests.