

FLU FOCUS

An e-magazine with information and resources on influenza in the European Region

Issue No.2, March 2011

From the WHO Regional Office for Europe, WHO/Europe - <http://www.euro.who.int/>

Flu Focus is an e-magazine published by the WHO Regional Office for Europe that covers recent developments, research, reports, materials and resources on influenza. We particularly focus on vaccine and immunization, laboratories and surveillance, and communications, but also present materials and references on clinical management and hospital preparedness. The aim of *Flu Focus* is to equip the WHO European Region's Member States and influenza focal points with information and resources that strengthen evidence-informed decision-making and country-specific activities and responses.

This e-magazine will be sent to you on a regular basis throughout the influenza season (week 40 - week 20 in the following year).

We hope that you will consider this e-magazine as a channel through which to share information across the Region. *Flu Focus* welcomes new knowledge and experiences in influenza responses – such as your case studies, strategic thinking, supporting material and any other relevant documentation. Please contact influenza@euro.who.int if you wish to submit something for a future issue.

This issue of *Flu Focus* will be available shortly on the WHO Regional Office for Europe website at <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/publications/flu-focus2/flu-focus> in both English and Russian.

Этот выпуск *Flu Focus* будет также вскоре помещен на сайте Европейского регионального бюро ВОЗ: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/publications/flu-focus2/flu-focus> на английском и русском языках.

Flu Focus will provide updates on influenza and spotlight key features that the WHO Regional Office for Europe would like to bring to your attention.

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Issue No.2 Summary

As we move towards the end of the 2010/2011 influenza season, this issue of *Flu Focus* provides you with an overview of the epidemiological and virological situation during the course of the first half of the season. It also provides a link to preview the report from the Fourth IHR Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) in Relation to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009. WHO headquarters is currently accepting comments and feedback about this report, in advance of the Fourth IHR Review Committee meeting later this month.

The primary focus of this issue is the summary of four multi-country clinical teleconferences that took place from the end of January through the beginning of February. The calls, organized jointly with ECDC and with the support of the Health Protection Agency, United Kingdom, had the objective of facilitating the exchange of information on the clinical management of patients with severe disease due to influenza A(H1N1) 2009 and supporting countries in the Region that are experiencing strains on their critical care services due to severe cases.

Additionally, this issue shares a document created to outline the key issues for case management of influenza A(H1N1) 2009, as well as a number of useful links from WHO/Europe and WHO headquarters.

TOPICAL FEATURES

1. Overview of the epidemiological and virological situation of the 2010/2011 influenza season in the WHO European Region (week 40/2010 to week 03/2011)

This overview of influenza data from the WHO European Region from week 40/2010 through week 3/2011 was submitted for consideration during the WHO Northern Hemisphere Vaccine Strain Selection Meeting, held in Geneva on 14-17 February 2011. As mentioned above, the 2010/2011 influenza season appears to be progressing in a west to east fashion across much of Europe. Increases in influenza activity have been accompanied by increases in hospitalised Severe Acute Respiratory Infections (SARI) and in severe influenza cases admitted to intensive care units. Pandemic influenza A(H1N1) 2009 viruses are the predominant circulating viruses but, in contrast to the 2009/2010 season, there is a higher rate of co-circulation with influenza B viruses and a substantial decrease in the proportion of influenza A(H3N2) viruses. Currently, 98% of antigenically characterized viruses from the 2010/2011 influenza season correspond with the viruses recommended by WHO for inclusion in the 2010/2011 northern hemisphere influenza vaccine.

For the complete text of the overview please visit:

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/publications/2010/epidemiological-and-virological-situation-update-of-the-20102011-influenza-season-in-the-who-european-region-week-402010-to-week-032011>

2. Preview report of the Fourth IHR Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) in Relation to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009

WHO headquarters has now released a preview of the report of the Fourth IHR Review Committee on the Functioning of the International Health Regulations (2005) in Relation to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009. Member States are encouraged to provide comments and feedback by email to ihr-pandemicreview@who.int (see note from Chairman via the link below) or during the plenary meeting of the Review Committee in Geneva on 28 March 2011 (invitations sent through permanent missions in Geneva; agenda available via link below). The committee will then finalize the report and present it to the 64th World Health Assembly.

WHO/Europe has also performed an evaluation of the pandemic, focusing on how pandemic preparedness aided the response to pandemic (H1N1) 2009. This report provides recommendations on good practices in pandemic preparedness at the national, regional and local level within countries. It also outlines requests for actions WHO should take to assist with pandemic preparedness planning. We would be happy to receive your comments on these recommendations at influenza@euro.who.int

To view the report preview, note from the Chairman and Review Committee meeting agenda please visit: http://www.who.int/ihr/4th_meeting/en/index.html

To view the Recommendations for good practice in pandemic preparedness (identified through evaluation of the response to the global pandemic) please visit: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/publications/2010/recommendations-for-good-practice-in-pandemic-preparedness-identified-through-evaluation-of-the-response-to-pandemic-h1n1-2009>

SURVEILLANCE AND LABORATORY

3. EuroFlu bulletin update (week 9, 2011)

Continuing influenza activity despite declining trends in many countries

ILI and ARI consultation rates continue to decline throughout most parts of the WHO European Region with the majority of countries reporting medium or low activity. During week 9/2011, of the 39 countries reporting on consultation rates for ILI and/or ARI, 22 reported decreases while 3 (Armenia, Iceland and Ukraine) reported increases. Among 41 countries reporting on the geographical spread of influenza, a majority reported either widespread (13) or regional (10) activity, while 17 reported either sporadic or local activity. One reported no activity. High-intensity influenza activity was reported only by Georgia (compared with 5 countries last week), while 25 countries reported medium intensity and 14 countries reported low intensity. The impact of influenza on health care systems was severe in one country (Georgia), low in 14 and moderate in 7 of the 22 countries reporting on this indicator.

The percentage of sentinel specimens testing positive for influenza is declining overall, but remains high in several countries. Whereas pandemic influenza A(H1N1) 2009 and influenza B currently co-dominate in northern and western Europe, pandemic influenza A(H1N1) 2009 is the dominant virus in the central and eastern parts of the Region.

Sentinel surveillance for SARI indicates that SARI hospitalizations are declining in the south-eastern part of the Region, while some countries in central Europe are observing increasing trends. Prior to seasonal increases in influenza activity, a relatively large portion of sentinel SARI hospitalizations occurred in the group aged 0-4. With increases in influenza activity, there have been associated increases in the relative proportion of SARI hospitalizations in older children, young adults and adults.

For more detailed information, please see www.euroflu.org and <http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/activities/surveillance/eisn/pages/index.aspx>

CLINICAL MANAGEMENT

4. Clinical teleconferences – Organized jointly with ECDC and with support from the Health Protection Agency

In January and February 2011, WHO/Europe held a series of four multi-country clinical teleconferences, organized jointly with ECDC and with support from the Health Protection Agency, United Kingdom. Conferences in English took place on 26 January and 9 February, while calls with Russian speaking countries took place on 2 and 16 February.

The aim of these teleconferences was two-fold: 1) to facilitate the exchange of information on the clinical management of patients with severe disease due to influenza A(H1N1) 2009 and 2) to support countries in the Region that are experiencing strains on their critical care services due to patients with severe disease caused primarily by A(H1N1) 2009 and related co-morbidities.

During the conference calls, clinicians from the United Kingdom and Ireland, as well as public health specialists from various organizations and research institutes in Spain, Germany, Ireland and the U.K., presented their respective experiences with management and information gathering of cases, with a particular emphasis on severe cases. Following these presentations, the Health Protection Agency (HPA) of the U.K. led a question and answer (Q&A) session, which allowed clinicians to discuss and review a series of topics related to case management.

A report on the Q&A session will be available online and will be shared in the next issue of *Flu Focus*.

5. Influenza (H1N1) 2009: Key issues for case management

WHO/Europe has created a document outlining the key issues for case management of influenza (H1N1) 2009. This document provides clinicians (both general practitioners and hospital physicians) with a summary of the key considerations for the management of patients with influenza A(H1N1) 2009 virus infection, covering the full spectrum of clinical disease. It also provides a list of key WHO guidance related to clinical management.

For the complete text of the document in English and Russian please visit:
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/publications/2012/influenza-h1n1-2009-key-issues-for-case-management>

OTHER

6. Useful links and resources:

WHO/Europe influenza website
<http://www.euro.who.int/influenza>

WHO recommendations on vaccination for 2010/2011 winter influenza season
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/publications/2010/vaccine-recommendations-for-20102011-winter-influenza-season>

Evaluation of the response to pandemic (H1N1) 2009 in the European Region
<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/diseases-and-conditions/influenza/pandemic-h1n1-2009/evaluation-of-the-response-to-pandemic-h1n1-2009-in-the-european-region>

WHO/Europe Vaccine-preventable diseases and immunization
<http://www.euro.who.int/vaccine>

WHO headquarters Immunization, vaccines and biologicals
<http://www.who.int/immunization/en/>

WHO headquarters influenza site
<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/en/>

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) influenza site
<http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/healthtopics/influenza/Pages/index.aspx>

Sent to you from the WHO Regional Office for Europe

You can find the current and archived issues of *Flu Focus* on the WHO Regional Office for Europe website <http://www.euro.who.int/influenza>

If you have received this e-magazine and wish to add colleagues, partners, associates or friends (or if you wish to unsubscribe), please contact influenza@euro.who.int

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