

Baltimore City Seasonal Influenza Surveillance Report:

Week 3 - Week ending January 19, 2008



This week's level: **Flu Alert**

- An lab-confirmed Influenza A outbreak at an assisted-living facility in Baltimore City was reported this week
- 16% of "rapid" influenza tests reported by Baltimore City sentinel laboratories this week were positive
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Influenza is widespread in several states surrounding Maryland. <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/usmap.htm>
- For information on preventing the flu (including vaccination), visit the Health Department website at <http://www.baltimorehealth.org/flu> or call 311

SUMMARY

Syndromic surveillance:¹ 3% of visits reported by sentinel healthcare providers² this week in Baltimore City were due to influenza-like-illness (ILI)⁴—however, this is based on one report. The average number of 911 calls containing complaints of “sick” or “breathing problems” has been increasing steadily.

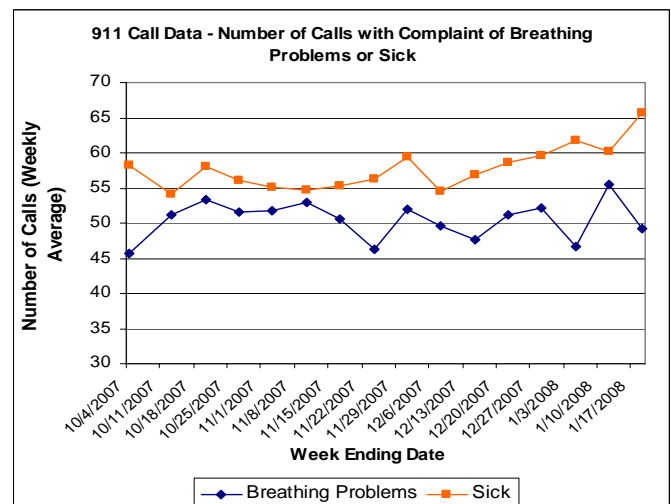
Documented influenza: The percentage of positive "rapid" influenza tests reported by Baltimore City sentinel laboratories⁵ remains high. 16.3% of tests were positive, an increase from last week when the percent positive was 13.6%. There were no deaths due to influenza⁶ and the number of deaths due to pneumonia and influenza were consistent with this same time period in past years.

SYNDROMIC SURVEILLANCE

911 Call Data

There were four mentions of “fever” in the text of 911 calls⁷ during this period. Weekly averages of

daily 911 calls for “breathing problems” and “sick” complaints are graphed below. The average number of these calls has increasing steadily for the past several weeks; they are consistent with this time period in previous years.



Emergency Department Data

During the past week, the number of patients presenting with chief complaints⁸ of fever or flu-like symptoms was consistent with this time period in previous years.

ILI Cases at Doctor's Offices

Table 1: Proportion of patient visits due to ILI from sentinel providers in Baltimore City and the Baltimore Metro Region

Week	No. of Reporting Sentinel Providers (Total)	Cases of ILI	Patients seen by reporting providers	% of patient visits due to ILI
Baltimore City				
3	1 (3)	10	309	3.2%
Baltimore Metro Region³				
3	2 (13)	10	419	2.4%

DOCUMENTED INFLUENZA

Lab Confirmed Cases of Influenza

The Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene reported that the strain of the first flu isolate (from a Baltimore City Resident) was A/Solomon Islands/3/2006-like, which is a match to one of the three components of this season's influenza vaccine.

Rapid Test Confirmed Cases of Influenza

Table 2: Percent of positive rapid flu tests from Baltimore City and the Baltimore Metro Region sentinel hospital laboratories

Week	No. of Reporting Labs (Total)	No. of Positive Tests	Total Tests Performed by Reporting Labs	% Positive for Flu
Baltimore City				
3	2 (4)	44	270	16.3%
Baltimore Metro Region				
3	7 (9)	59	420	14.0%

Institutional Outbreaks

An outbreak of influenza A occurred at a Baltimore City assisted-living facility during this time period. To date, 3 residents and 1 staff member have become ill; two of the residents were hospitalized.

Influenza and Pneumonia Mortality

There were no deaths due to influenza and 21 deaths due to pneumonia. This constituted 11.1% of all deaths reported in Baltimore City during this week, similar to the same time period during the years 2003-2007 when P&I mortality ranged from 7.2-16.5%.

HOSPITAL CAPACITY DATA

There were no aberrations in the frequency of yellow or red alerts⁹ in Baltimore City hospitals during this period.

NOTES

¹The main goal of syndromic surveillance is to identify illness clusters early, before diagnoses are confirmed and reported to public health agencies. Non-specific indicators of illness such as chief complaint data from emergency departments will provide early indications that flu activity in the community may be increasing.

²The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) collects data from sentinel providers throughout the state as part of the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention's (CDC) national influenza surveillance program. The percent of patient visits due to influenza-like illness (ILI) is calculated as the total number of patients with ILI seen at all sentinel providers' offices divided by the total number of patients seen at these practices. Not all sentinel providers report each week; the number reporting each week this period is documented in Table 1. Additionally, the number of providers reporting in the city is small and could result in fluctuations in the % of patient visits due to ILI.

³The Baltimore Metropolitan Region includes Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard Counties, and Baltimore City.

⁴Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) is defined as a fever (temperature of 100°F [37.8°C] or greater) and a cough and/or a sore throat in the absence of a KNOWN cause other than influenza. (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/pdf/flu-surveillance-overview.pdf> - Last Accessed October 16th, 2007).

⁵Data on the percent of positive rapid-flu tests are reported to the Health Department by DHMH on a weekly basis.

⁶The Baltimore City Health Department reports mortality due to influenza and pneumonia to the CDC on a weekly basis. Deaths for which pneumonia or influenza was listed as the underlying or contributing cause of death are counted in this report. These numbers represent deaths that occurred in Baltimore City (regardless of residence of the deceased). The date of death is usually within ~2-3 weeks of the report.

⁷The Biosurveillance Analyst at the Baltimore City Health Department receives 911 call data on a daily basis and analyzes these data for aberrations in the number of calls in which "breathing problems," "sick," "fever," or "flu" are included in the text.

⁸Five Baltimore City emergency departments report chief complaint data to the Health Department's Biosurveillance Analyst regularly. Based on historical data, the data are analyzed for aberrations in chief complaints of fever or flu-like syndromes.

⁹A hospital is on yellow alert when there are no available beds and ambulances are re-routed to a different hospital. Red alerts occur when the hospital has no available beds with EKG monitors and ambulances must be re-routed.

MORE INFORMATION ON INFLUENZA SUREVILLANCE

For more information on the Baltimore City Health Department's Seasonal Influenza plan and for past reports, please visit our website:

www.baltimorehealth.org/flu

For information on influenza activity state-wide, please visit the DHMH's Influenza surveillance program website:

http://edcp.org/influenza/Influenza_serv.html

For information on influenza activity nation-wide, please visit the CDC's website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity.htm>