Key points – Wales

- Surveillance data from patients in the community and in hospital suggest that influenza virus is not currently circulating in Wales.

- The consultation rate for influenza in Wales during week 43 (week ending 20/10/2013) reported through the GP Sentinel Surveillance of Infections Scheme is 4.7 consultations per 100,000 practice population. The provisional consultation rate was highest in patients aged 75 years and older (11.1 per 100,000 population).

- The consultation rate is stable compared to the rate for the previous week (4.5 per 100,000) and remains well below the historical threshold for normal seasonal activity (25 consultations per 100,000 per week).

- The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) has developed new thresholds to predict when influenza-like illness reaches levels expected for the flu season, in a standardised manner across Europe. ECDC, using the Moving Epidemic Method (MEM) have calculated this threshold for Wales as 9.7 consultations per 100,000. The current influenza consultation rate is well below this threshold.

- The total number of consultations with Out of Hours (OOH) doctors in Wales, reported to Public Health Wales during week 43 increased to 10,595 (compared to 9,927 in week 42). The proportion of respiratory-related consultations with OOH doctors decreased to 16.8% (compared to 18.6% in week 42) (Figure 6).

- No samples from patients with influenza symptoms were submitted by sentinel GPs during week 43 (Figure 3).

- During week 43, 81 specimens were received and tested by Public Health Wales Microbiology Cardiff and Swansea Laboratories, from non-sentinel GP and hospitalised patients with influenza-like symptoms. No samples tested positive for influenza, 16 samples tested positive for RSV, two tested positive for parainfluenza and 21 tested positive for rhinovirus.

Key points – Influenza vaccination rates in Wales

Based on data from 87% of Welsh practices, reported through Audit+, as at 29/10/2013:

- 43.8% of patients aged 65 years and older have been vaccinated against influenza (Health Board range 40.8% to 47.7%).

- 27.9% of patients aged six months to 64 years in at-risk groups have been vaccinated against influenza (HB range 24.1% to 31.6%).

Key points – UK and Europe

- Based on the latest data available: The RCGP influenza-like illness rate in week 42 remained low in England (8.1 per 100,000), Scotland (7.6 per 100,000) and Northern Ireland (15.6 per 100,000). UK summary data are available each week from the Public Health England National Influenza Report. No samples from UK sentinel GPs tested positive for influenza, however three influenza positive samples were reported through Public Health England’s Datamart scheme (two influenza B and one influenza A (not sub-typed)).
• Euroflu reports that during week 42 influenza activity was at low levels in all countries which submitted data. In countries with established thresholds consultation rates for influenza-like illness (ILI) and acute respiratory infection (ARI) were reported to be below national thresholds. During week 42 a total of 4,608 sentinel and non-sentinel specimens were tested for influenza, 25 of which were positive (14 were positive for influenza A and 11 for influenza B). For more information on European level influenza surveillance see: http://www.euroflu.org

News update – Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV)

• On 29/10/13, WHO reported an additional new laboratory confirmed case with Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV).
• Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 145 laboratory confirmed cases of human infection with MERS-CoV, including 62 deaths.
• Based on the current situation and available information, WHO encourages all member states to continue their surveillance for severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and to carefully review any unusual patterns. Health care providers are advised to be vigilant among recent travellers returning from the Middle East who develop severe SARI. Updates are available from the WHO Global Alert and Response website: http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/index.html
• WHO have also issued advice on MERS-CoV for pilgrimages: http://www.who.int/ith/updates/20130725/en/index.html

News update - detection of human infection with avian influenza A(H7N9), China

• On 24/10/2013, the WHO reported an additional case of human infection with novel avian influenza A(H7N9) virus in China. To date, the WHO has reported a total of 137 laboratory confirmed cases, including 45 deaths. So far, there is no evidence of ongoing human-to-human transmission.
• The risk of international spread of avian influenza A(H7N9) is considered to be low at present, however, it is important that clinicians are aware of the possibility of human infection with animal influenza in persons presenting with severe acute respiratory disease who have been to China recently. The World Health Organisation is following this event closely with the Chinese authorities and updates are available from the WHO Global Alert and Response website: http://www.who.int/csr/don/en/index.html

World update

• The WHO report that as of 24/10/13, influenza-like illness activity had started to increase in some European countries, but influenza detections remain low in temperate zones of the Northern Hemisphere.
• In tropical Asia, influenza activity was variable: In Hong Kong and Thailand activity decreased, whilst in southern China and Vietnam activity increased. Co-circulation of influenza A(H3N2) and influenza B virus was reported in this region.
• In the Caribbean region of Central America and tropical South America cases of influenza decreased. RSV predominated in the Caribbean and Central America but remained within expected levels.
• Influenza activity peaked in temperate countries of South America and South Africa in late June. Acute respiratory disease activity was within expected levels in temperate South America. Co-circulation of influenza A(H3N2) and influenza B was reported in this region, although currently RSV predominates.
• In Australia and New Zealand influenza activity appears to have peaked. Co-circulation of influenza A(H3N2), influenza A(H1N1)pdm2009 and influenza B was reported in both countries.
• In New Zealand, the consultation rate for ILI in week 42 was 19.1 consultations per 100,000 (compared to 20.6 per 100,000 in week 41), which is below the baseline rate of 50 consultations per 100,000. A total of 341 swabs were received from sentinel and non-sentinel surveillance, of these 95 tested positive for influenza (32 influenza A(H3N2), 11 influenza A(H1N1)pdm09, 31 influenza A (not sub-typed) and 21 influenza B).  
Source: Institute of Environmental Science & Research, New Zealand  

• According to the latest available update (covering 28/09/2013 – 11/10/2013), influenza activity in Australia appears to have peaked at the end of August, overall activity has been relatively low and the 2013 season started later and appeared to have occurred over a shorter period of time. Nationally, whilst influenza A remains the predominant virus type, the proportion of influenza B has been higher than in recent years.  
Source: Australian Influenza Surveillance Report.  

• The USA Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report that, as of 23/10/2013, influenza activity remains low across the United States. Nationally, during the week ending 19/10/2013, 35 (3.8%) out of 3,513 specimens tested positive for influenza. Of the influenza positive specimens reported, 116 were influenza A(H1N1)pdm 2009, 30 were influenza A(H3), 286 were influenza A(not sub-typed) and 72 were influenza B. Weekly surveillance report on the flu season in the USA are available from: http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/
Summary of influenza activity in Wales

**Figure 1. Clinical consultation rate per 100,000 practice population in Welsh sentinel practices (as of 30/10/2013).**

*Reporting changed to Audit+ surveillance system

**The Moving Epidemic Method has been adopted by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to calculate thresholds for GP ILI consultations for seasonally expected influenza activity in a standardised approach across Europe. The threshold calculated for Wales ILI consultation rates is 9.7 per 100,000.*

**Figure 2. Historical clinical consultation rate per 100,000 practice population in Welsh sentinel practices (week 40 1996 – week 43 2013).**

*Reporting changed to Audit+ surveillance system*
**Table 1. Age-specific consultations (per 100,000) for influenza in Welsh sentinel practices, week 38 2013 - week 43 2013 (as of 30/10/2013)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>38</th>
<th>39</th>
<th>40</th>
<th>41</th>
<th>42</th>
<th>43</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 14</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 - 24</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 44</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 - 64</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 - 74</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3. Specimens submitted for virological testing by sentinel GPs as of 30/10/2013, by week of sample collection, week 43 2012 - week 43 2013.**

* Tested negative for influenza, adenovirus, rhinovirus, RSV, adenovirus, parainfluenza, mycoplasma and human metapneumovirus
* Tested negative for influenza, adenovirus, rhinovirus, RSV, adenovirus, parainfluenza, mycoplasma and human metapneumovirus
Update on influenza immunisation in Wales

Table 2. Uptake of influenza immunisation in patients aged 65y and older and in those aged 6m to 64y at clinical risk, data correct as at 29/10/2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Board</th>
<th>Patients aged 65y and older</th>
<th>Patients aged 6m to 64y at risk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immunised (n)</td>
<td>Denominator (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abertawe Bro Morgannwg UHB</td>
<td>35954</td>
<td>85908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aneurin Bevan HB</td>
<td>44695</td>
<td>99060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsi Cadwaladr UHB</td>
<td>59072</td>
<td>134886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardiff and Vale UHB</td>
<td>30293</td>
<td>68955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cwm Taf HB</td>
<td>23260</td>
<td>48812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hywel Dda HB</td>
<td>26369</td>
<td>64610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powys Teaching HB</td>
<td>12622</td>
<td>27971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>232265</td>
<td>530202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: General Practice data, extracted using the Audit+ Data Quality System

Figure 5. Uptake of influenza vaccine in patients aged 65y and older and in those aged 6m to 64y at clinical risk, data correct as at 29/10/2013.

Weekly trends in uptake (%) of seasonal influenza vaccine

Figures for 29th Sep 2013 to 26th Oct 2013 have been revised from previous weekly reports, to exclude 49 practices currently experiencing difficulties submitting reliable data through Audit+. Data from these practices will be factored back in to weekly reports as their issues are resolved.
During week 43 the percentage of total calls to NHS Direct Wales which were influenza-related remained stable at 9.8% (compared to 9.6% in week 42) (figure 7).

1 Data supplied by Health Statistics and Analysis Unit, Welsh Government.

Flu related calls are the sum of calls recorded as 'cold/flu', 'cough', 'headache', 'fever' and 'sore throat'.

Out of Hours consultations and calls to NHS Direct Wales

Figure 6. Weekly total consultations to Out of Hours services in Wales and numbers of respiratory-related diagnoses (as of 30/10/2013).

Figure 7. Influenza related calls to NHS Direct Wales1 (as a percentage of total calls) to week 43 2013 (as of as of 30/10/2013).
Links:

Public Health Wales influenza surveillance webpage:
http://www.publichealthwales.org/flu-activity

NICE influenza antiviral usage guidance:
http://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/TA158

Wales influenza information:
http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/43745

England influenza surveillance:
http://www.hpa.org.uk/infections/topics_az/influenza/seasonal/default.htm

Scotland influenza surveillance:
http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/search/atozdetail.aspx?subject=95

Northern Ireland influenza surveillance:
http://www.fluawareni.info/

European Centre for Communicable Disease:
http://ecdc.europa.eu/

European influenza information:
http://www.euroflu.org/

Advice on influenza immunisation (for NHS Wales users)
http://nww.publichealthwales.wales.nhs.uk/immunisation

For further information on this report, please email Public Health Wales using:
surveillance.requests@wales.nhs.uk