

SEASONAL DISEASES

Influenza, 2021

There has been a sustained increase in influenza cases from the influenza-like illness (ILI) (outpatient in public health clinics) and pneumonia (hospital) surveillance sentinel sites in recent weeks. The total number of influenza cases detected by the syndromic sentinel surveillance programmes conducted by the NICD as of week 41 of 2021 (week ending 17 October 2021) has increased to 154.

The increase in influenza detections at pneumonia sentinel sites has been observed mostly in Gauteng Province, with the predominant subtype and lineage being B Victoria (49/92, 53.3%) followed by A (H1N1)pdm09 (21/92, 22.8%), A (H3N2) (14/92, 15.2%), B subtype pending or inconclusive (5/92, 5.4%) and A subtype pending or inconclusive (3/92, 3.3%) (Figure 3). For the ILI sentinel sites, the increase has been observed mostly in North West Province, with the predominant subtype and lineage being B Victoria (39/62, 62.9%) followed by A (H3N2) (5/62, 8.1%), A (H1N1)pdm09 (5/62, 8.1%), A subtype pending or inconclusive (9/62, 14.5%), and B subtype inconclusive (4/62, 6.5%) (Figure 4).

Clinicians are encouraged to consider influenza as part of a differential diagnosis when managing patients presenting with respiratory illness. It is also important to encourage patients, especially those at high risk for developing severe influenza illness and complication to take influenza vaccine. Because of the recent changes in respiratory virus epidemiology as a result of non-pharmaceutical interventions to control COVID-19, it is possible that we may see increasing influenza detections even as we enter the summer months. For this reason, it is still not too late to vaccinate against influenza.

Updated guidelines on influenza diagnosis and management are available at: https://www.nicd.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Influenza-guidelines_-April-2021-final.pdf

The WHO recommended composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the 2022 southern hemisphere influenza season is available at: <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/346863/WER9642-eng-fre.pdf>

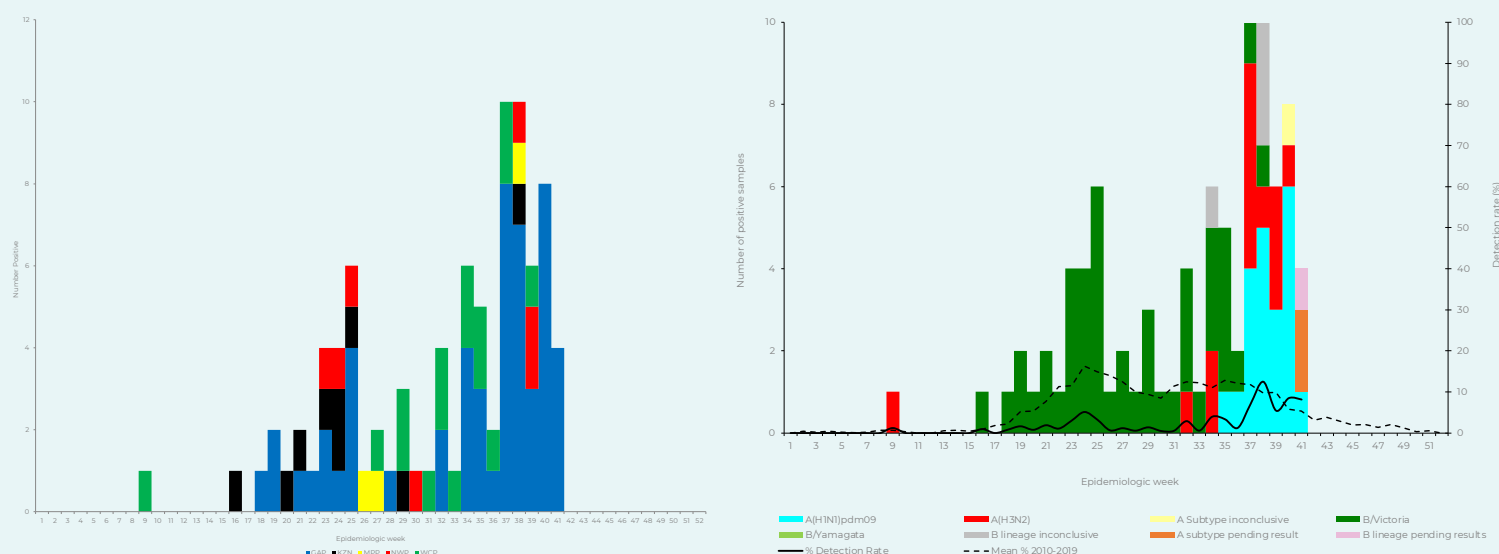


Figure 3. Number of positive cases by province and epidemiologic week (left) and number of positive cases by influenza subtype and lineage and detection rate (right), pneumonia surveillance, 01 January 2021 – 17 October 2021

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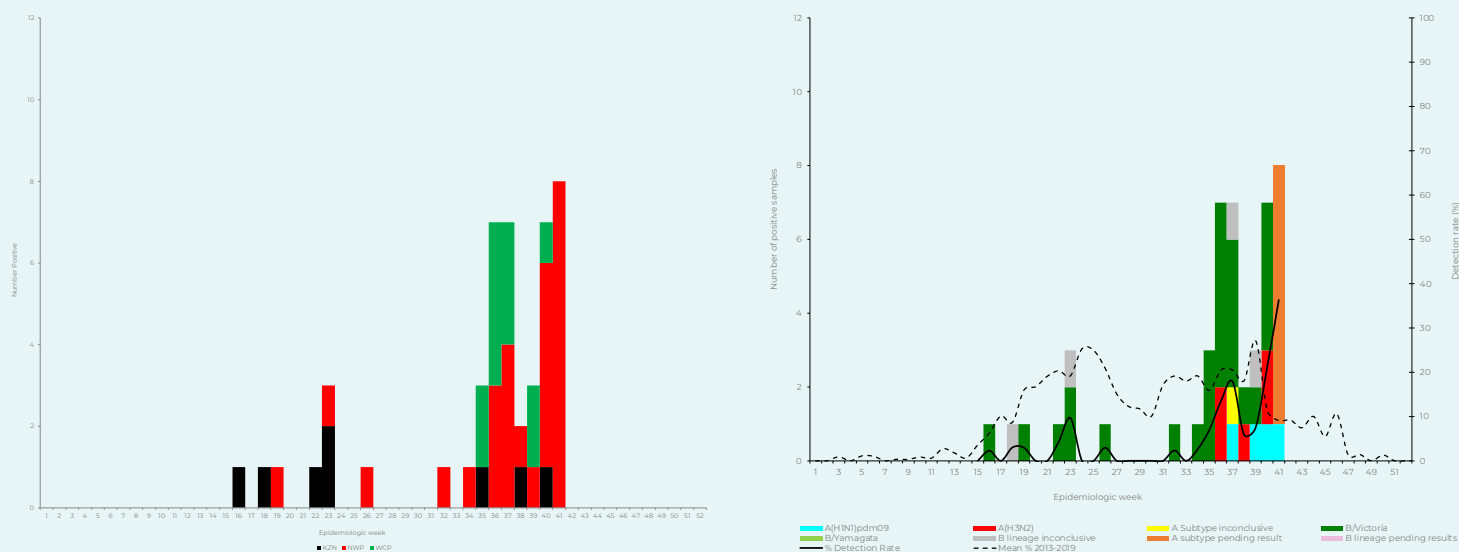


Figure 4. Number of positive cases by province and epidemiologic week (left) and number of positive cases by influenza subtype and lineage and detection rate (right), ILI surveillance, 01 Jan 2021 – 17 October 2021

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) 2021

The total number of RSV cases detected by the syndromic sentinel surveillance programmes conducted by the NICD as of week 41 of 2021 (week ending 17 October 2021) has increased to 479; 74 (15.4%) from ILI surveillance and 405 (84.6%) from pneumonia surveillance. The majority of RSV positive cases

were subgroup A (253/479, 52.8%), followed by subgroup B (218/479, 45.5%), eight (1.7%) were inconclusive. The detection rate continues to decrease these past few weeks to rates below 10% since week 26 (Figure 5).

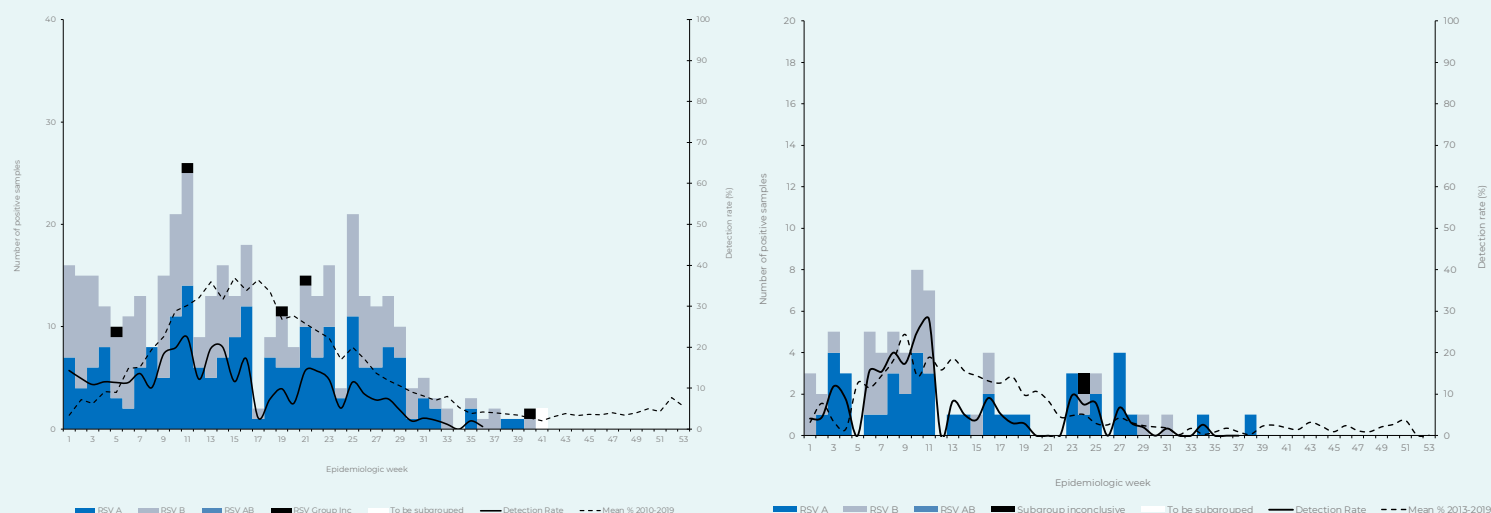


Figure 5. Number of samples testing positive for respiratory syncytial virus by subgroup and detection rate by week for pneumonia surveillance (left) and ILI surveillance (right), 01 Jan 2021 – 17 October 2021