

SEASONAL DISEASES

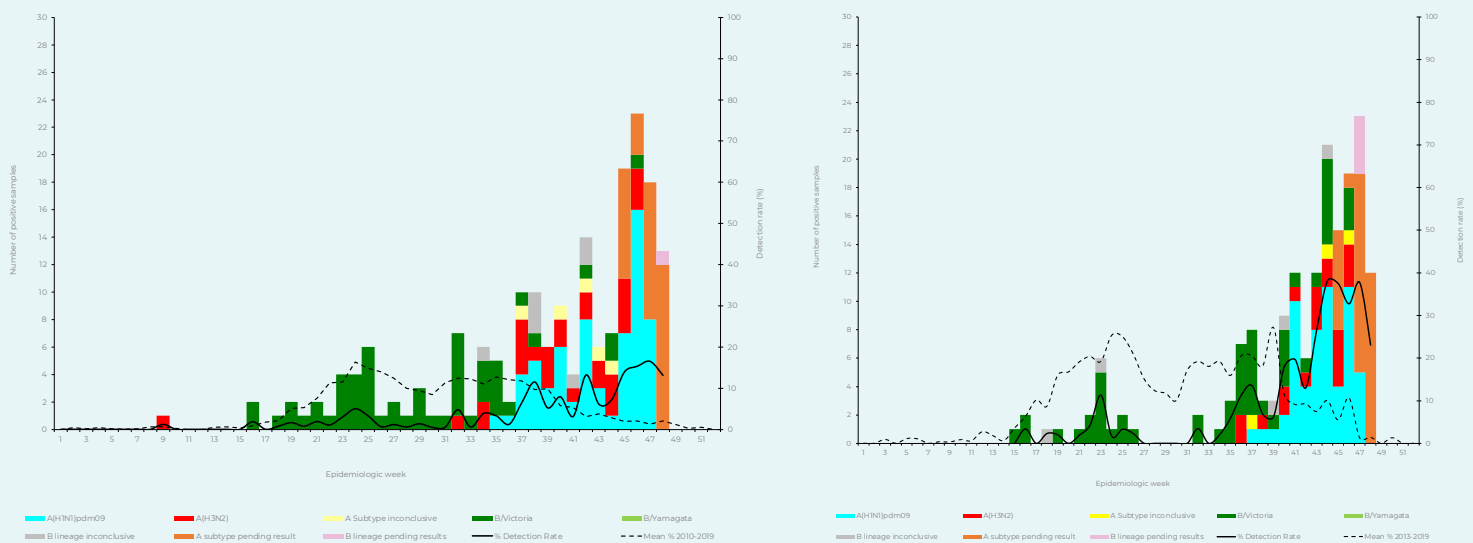
## Influenza, 2021 – Influenza activity continues

In recent weeks, the influenza-like illness (ILI) (outpatients in primary health clinics) and pneumonia (hospital) surveillance sentinel sites have seen a continued increase in influenza cases. As of week 48 of 2021 (week ending 5 December 2021), the total number of influenza cases detected by the NICD's syndromic sentinel surveillance programs had increased from 246 in week 45 (date of last communiqué) to 367.

As of week 48 2021, 193 influenza detections at pneumonia surveillance sentinel sites have been reported with the predominant subtype and lineage being influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 (65/193, 33.7%) followed by B Victoria (53/193, 27.4%) and A (H3N2) (29/193, 15.0%) (Figure 2). For the ILI sentinel sites, 174 influenza cases have been reported, with the predominant subtype and lineage being A (H1N1)pdm09 (58/174, 33.3%) followed by B Victoria (51/174, 29.3%) and A (H3N2) (19/174, 10.9%) (Figure 2). The detection rate in the past few weeks has been higher than the mean detection rate for 2010-2019 and 2013-2019 for pneumonia surveillance and ILI respectively.

During this time of co-circulation of influenza and SARS-CoV-2, when treating patients who present with respiratory illness, clinicians should also consider influenza as a differential diagnosis. Because of recent changes in respiratory virus epidemiology as a result of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) to control COVID-19, it is possible that influenza detections will continue to rise even during the summer months, especially if NPI compliance is relaxed. Individuals at increased risk of severe influenza illness or complications are encouraged to seek medical attention early. Individuals who are at risk of severe influenza illness include the elderly  $\geq 65$  years, children  $< 2$  years, individuals with underlying conditions (diabetes, chronic pulmonary and cardiac conditions) and those who are immunocompromised. 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](https://www.nicd.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Influenza-guidelines_-April-2021-final.pdf)



**Figure 2.** Number of positive cases by influenza subtype and lineage and detection rate, pneumonia surveillance (left) and ILI surveillance (right), 1 January – 5 December 2021

Source: Centre for Respiratory Diseases and Meningitis, NICD-NHLS; cherylc@nicd.ac.za