Influenza Virological Surveillance in the WHO African Region

Epidemiological Week 22, May 29 to June 4, 2017

During epidemiological week 22, 14 laboratories (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Cote d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Togo) in the African region influenza laboratory network contributed data for analysis. During the current epidemiological week, 111 specimens tested positive for influenza out of the 613 that were tested (18% positivity rate). This is an increase from week 21 where the positivity rate was 14%. The influenza positivity rate was comparable to that observed during the same week in 2016 (18%). Influenza types and subtypes identified were influenza A/H3 (63/111, 57%), influenza A/H1N1pdm09 (26/111, 23%) and influenza B (15/111, 14%). Seven influenza A specimens remain untyped (6%).

Cumulatively* from epidemiological week 1 to 22 the AFR influenza laboratory network has collected over 14,200 and tested 13,690 specimens, of which 1,246 have been positive for influenza virus (positivity rate 9%).

*adjusted for retrospective data.

Figure 1 – Weekly virological assessment of influenza specimens collected in the African region, weeks 1 to 22, 2017
During epidemiological week 22, no data was reported from the Northern transmission zone.

In the Eastern transmission zone 319 specimens were collected, 245 tested and 84 positives were identified (positivity rate 34%). Positive specimens identified were influenza type A/H3 (45/84, 54%), A/H1N1pdm09 (25/84, 30%) and influenza B (7/84, 8%). Seven specimens remain untyped (8%). Notably 80% of positives (67/84) specimens were from the Indian Ocean islands of Madagascar and Mauritius.

In the Western transmission zone 203 specimens (215 specimens collected) were tested for influenza of which 11 were positive. The positivity rate in the Western zone was 5.4%, which is a significant decrease from week 21 where the positivity rate was nearly 5 times higher (23%). Influenza types and subtypes identified were influenza A/H3 (2/11, 18%), A/H1N1pdm09 (1/11, 9%) and influenza B (8/11, 73%) (Figure 2).

In the Southern transmission zone 16 positives were identified from the 134 tested (positivity rate 12%) and all positives were influenza A/H3.

In the Middle transmission zone no positives were identified from the 31 tested.

Figure 2. Virological analysis of influenza specimens collected from weeks 1 to 22, 2017 in the African region
Regionally, influenza A (all subtypes) remains the predominant influenza type circulating (710/1246, 57%), represented by influenza A/H3 (424/710, 60%) and A/H1N1pdm09 (239/710, 33%) while 47 specimens remain untyped (7%). Influenza B represents 43% (536/1246) of circulating influenza types (Figure 3).