

Current major event

Low Influenza activities in EMR

The Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) witnessed influenza activities at or near inter-seasonal levels. Tunisia, Iran, Egypt, Pakistan, Morocco and Oman have all reported a decreasing and low numbers of influenza cases in the last couple of weeks following a peak at the start of 2012 (*Please see the graph*).

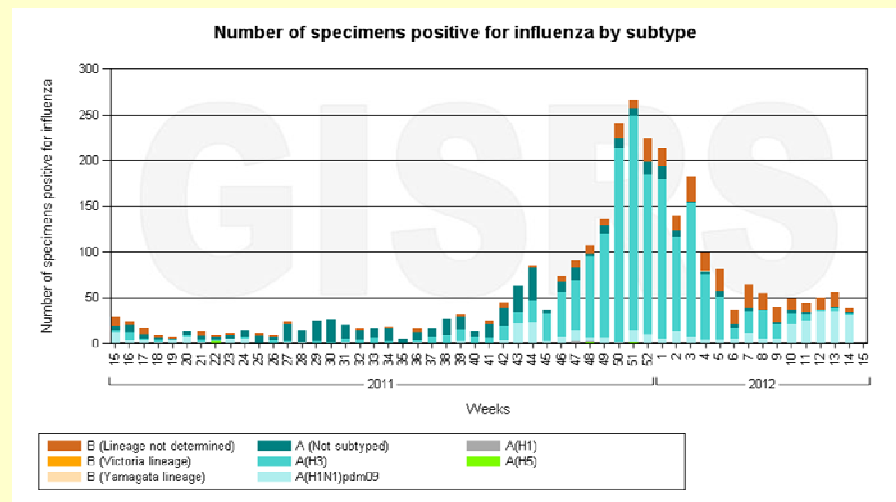
Editorial note

Influenza activity is declining in some countries of the northern hemisphere but continue to increase in other areas. Decreasing trends have also been reported in several countries in Europe for the last couple of weeks. Although a few countries ILI consultations are above the thresholds as well as an increase in the percentage of influenza positive cases.

Most countries in the Eastern Mediterranean Region have reported low levels of influenza activities in last few weeks. The predominant influenza virus circulating in the countries of the EMR (*Please see the box*) is influenza A(H3N2). A few countries including Pakistan and Morocco are also reporting small numbers of influenza type B, which is now the most commonly detected influenza virus in Oman and Tunisia as well.

The world has just experienced the century's first influenza pandemic. The two outstanding characteristics of the 2009 A (H1N1) influenza pandemic were its ability to cause major out-of-season epidemics in temperate countries and to cause unusually severe disease and death among the young and in healthy people.

Although acute respiratory infections are major contributors to morbidity and mortality in many countries of the EMR, the burden of influenza is still poorly understood in the EMR. Much works have been done in the past particularly after the influenza pandemic in 2009-2010 on strengthening routine influenza surveillance both from an epidemiological and a virological standpoint. Accordingly, surveillance data from the coun-



Source: FluNet. Available at : http://www.who.int/influenza/gisrs_laboratory/flunet/en/

Circulating influenza virus in some of the selected countries of EMR*

Country	A/H3N2	A/H5N1	Flu-B
Pakistan	☑	X	☑
Egypt	☑	☑	X
Iran	☑	X	☑
Morocco	☑	X	☑
Oman	☑	X	☑
Tunisia	☑	X	☑

tries of the EMR have increased substantially in the past five years, but they are still too sparse and inconsistent to allow for a thorough understanding of influenza virus circulation patterns on the continent and their associated morbidity and mortality, or to inform influenza control strategies. Information in low-income countries or in resource-limited settings is practically absent or missing.

As influenza can still cause severe illness and even deaths, it is critical that the Member States of the EMR maintain routine surveillance, focusing on influenza-like illness and cases of severe acute respiratory infections. In addition, it is critical that the countries continue to monitor for unusual events, such as clusters of severe respiratory illness or death until the season is over. This will help in early detection of unusual events that might indicate severity or pattern of influenza associated with a new virus.

Update on outbreaks

in the Eastern Mediterranean Region

Measles in Afghanistan, Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen; Avian Influenza (H5N1) in Egypt

Current public health events of international concern

[cumulative N° of cases (deaths), CFR %]

Avian influenza

China	[42(28), 66.7%]
Egypt	[166 (59), 35.5%]
Indonesia	[188 (156), 82.9 %]
Viet Nam	[123(61), 49.5%]
Cambodia	[20(18), 90%]
Bangladesh	[6(0) .]
Global total	[601(354), 58.9%]

Measles

Afghanistan	[261 (0)] #
Somalia	[1046 (na), na%]#
Yemen	[3800(124), 3.3%] #

Lassa fever

Nigeria	[623(70), 11.2 %] #
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CFR=Case-Fatality Rate;

Suspected cases only