



British Columbia H1N1 Surveillance Plan Summary

October 14, 2009

SUMMARY

Influenza surveillance in British Columbia is a multifaceted endeavor that ensures timely, systematic, and ongoing collection, analysis, and dissemination of data related to influenza disease. The recent introduction of the pandemic H1N1 virus has prompted the Province to strengthen its existing surveillance systems and add further systems to answer pressing questions related to the pandemic virus. This document will provide an overview of these systems and how they are used to address the myriad information demands during both seasonal and pandemic influenza activity, such as the need to know trends, patterns and impacts for prevention and resource planning and evaluation of influenza control strategies.

The cornerstone of influenza disease surveillance in the province includes a network of sentinel physicians (general practitioners) that has existed for over thirty years and laboratory detection of influenza viruses, including assessment for antiviral resistance and gene sequencing of a subset of viruses. A strong partnership between the provincial virology laboratory and epidemiology experts at the BC Centre for Disease Control, and close communication between the regional health authorities and provincial epidemiologists are both central to the success of influenza surveillance in BC.

The various surveillance indicators used on provincial and regional levels are grouped into the following categories:

Disease Epidemiology – i.e. sentinel physician surveillance, school outbreaks, long term care facility outbreaks, medical service plan utilization, laboratory test results, serologic surveys, emergency room use

Serious Outcomes – i.e. hospitalization, intensive care admissions, mortality

Interventions – i.e. antiviral use, antiviral resistance, antiviral adverse events, vaccine coverage, vaccing adverse events

Health system impacts – i.e. intensive care use

Special Populations or Circumstances – i.e. disease activity in remote and First Nations communities, enhance surveillance during Olympics

No one of these indicators is interpreted by itself; rather, the indicators are evaluated in aggregate, together forming a picture of influenza activity in the province. The document to come includes descriptions of these surveillance activities.

This document is subject to change as surveillance strategies necessarily evolve. Influenza is a highly changeable virus, and as such, the approaches used to monitor its impact must be flexible.