



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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Influenza in Jamaica 2016

INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE

24 October 2016

A. Introduction

In Jamaica, influenza is classified as a class 2 reportable disease. This means that weekly reports are to be submitted on a line listing form by health care providers to the Parish Medical Officer (Health).

Acute respiratory infection (ARI), also called fever and respiratory symptoms, which may include influenza cases, are captured by the syndromic surveillance system from the 77 sentinel sites throughout the country. Counts of the number of cases fitting the case definition are submitted weekly to the Ministry of Health through the Parish Health Department.

A separate but related surveillance system exists for severe acute respiratory infections (SARIs). Six major hospitals (Mandeville Regional Hospital, Cornwall Regional Hospital, St Ann's Bay Hospital, Bustamante Hospital for Children, Kingston Public Hospital and University Hospital of the West Indies) across the island are designated as SARI sentinel sites and submit weekly reports.

Jamaica is a part of the World Health Organization's Global Influenza Network¹, an international network of sentinel stations for influenza surveillance. The Network keeps track of the influenza virus types circulating in different parts of the world and so guides the antigen composition of vaccines. It also allows for the monitoring of the severity of disease and the impact on vulnerable groups.

B. Acute Respiratory Infection

Acute respiratory infection (ARI) surveillance detects changes in the trends in acute respiratory infections, including influenza. The number of cases of ARI reported to the Ministry of Health in week 41 (week ending 15 October 2016) exceeded the seasonal threshold. This means that Jamaica is now in the 2016/2017 Flu Season (Figure 1).

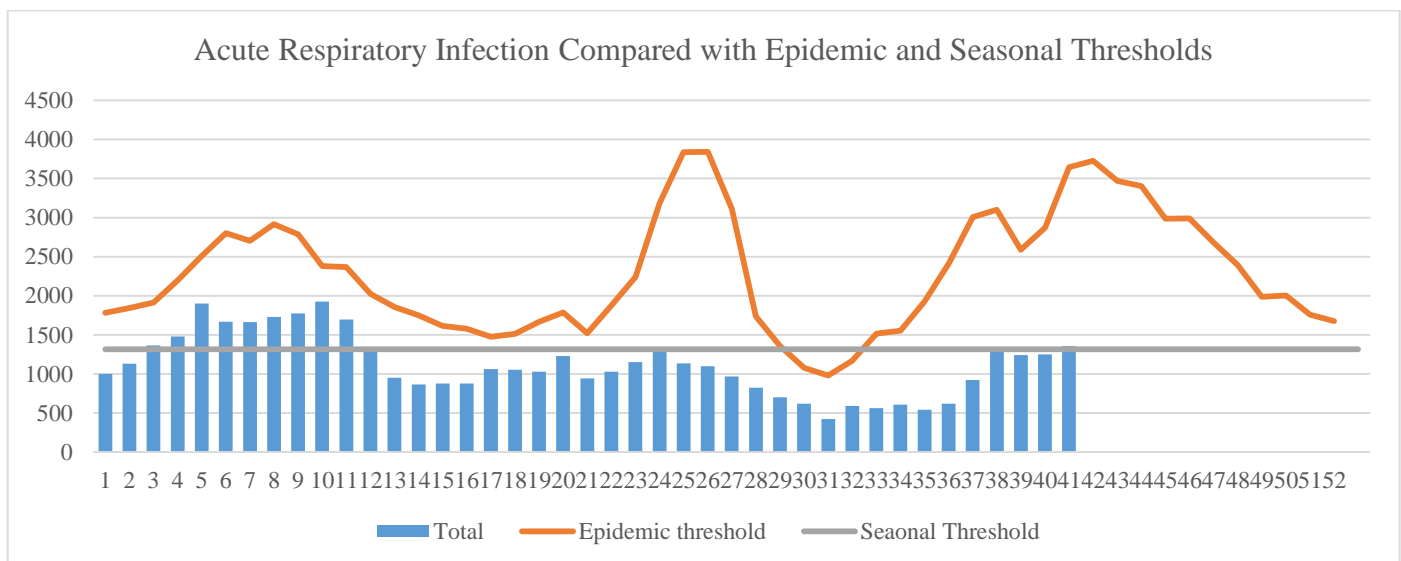


Figure 1. Total cases of acute respiratory infection compared with the epidemic threshold and seasonal threshold.

¹Source: World Health Organization - http://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/en/

C. Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI) Infections

Severe acute respiratory infection (SARI) cases have been increasing since epidemiological week 35, 2016 (figure 2). This indicates the 2016/2017 flu season, and up to epidemiological week 41 the number of cases reported are in keeping with seasonal trends.

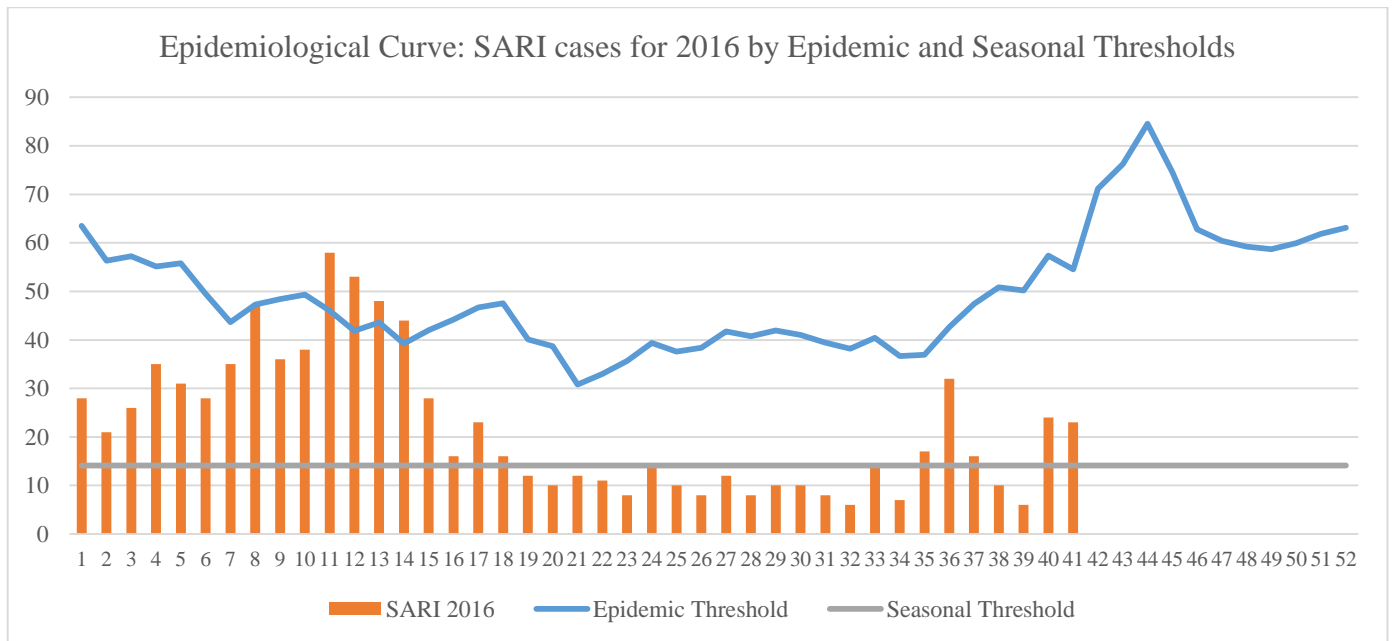


Figure 2. Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) reported for epidemiological Weeks 1-41 of 2016 compared with the Epidemic Threshold and Seasonal Threshold

D. Influenza Type Distribution 2009 to 2016

Influenza A (H1N1) pdm09, the influenza virus responsible for the 2009 pandemic, has been circulating in Jamaica since then. In 2009 and in 2013, Influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 predominated. In 2016, Influenza A (H1N1) is the predominant type circulating up to epidemiology week 41 (table 1).

Table 1: Influenza Distribution in Jamaica 2009-2016*

Year	# Influenza Positive	# A (H1N1) pdm09	% A (H1N1) pdm09	Predominant Influenza
2009	195	173	88.7	A (H1N1) pdm09
2010	95	8	8.4	A Seasonal (H3)
2011	76	13	17.1	Flu B
2012	107	12	11.2	Flu B
2013	61	34	55.7	A (H1N1) pdm09
2014	32	1	3.1	Flu B
2015	36	0	0.0	A Seasonal (H3)
2016*	132	82	62.1	A (H1N1) pdm09

*Up to Epidemiology Week 41

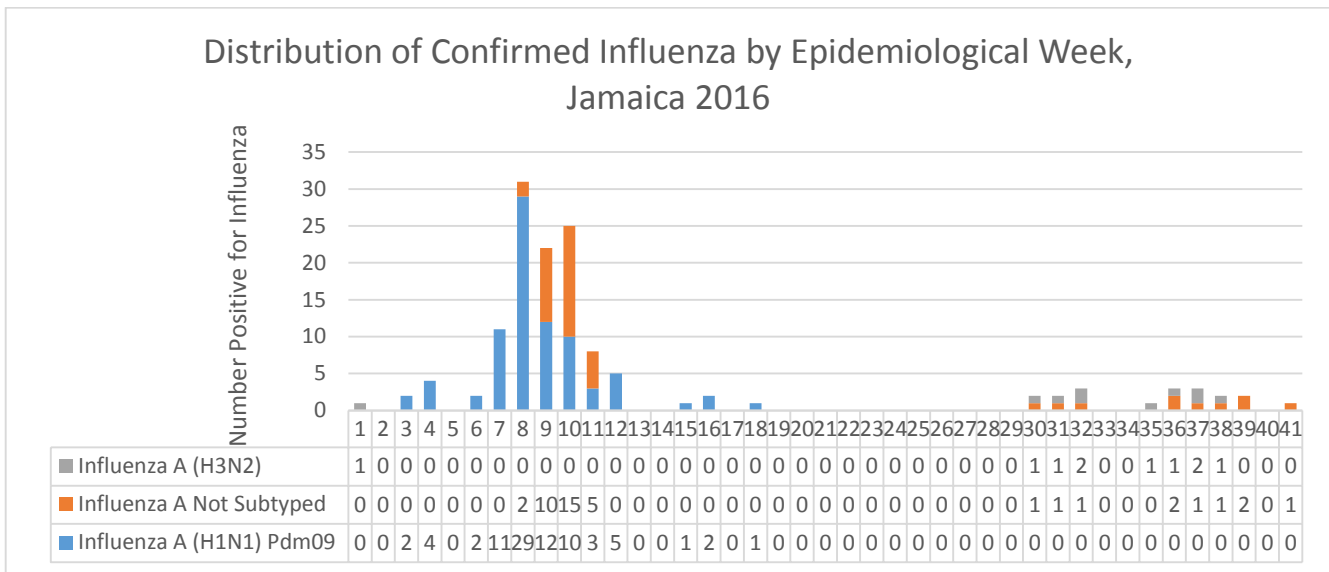


Figure 3: The Distribution of Influenza by Epidemiological Week 2016, Jamaica.

Strategies

- **Resource Mobilization:** The Ministry of Health was informed in June 2016 of a grant funding opportunity from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to build capacity within the surveillance system of Jamaica to detect, respond to and monitor changes in influenza viruses with special emphasis on capacity building and sustainability. A team of stakeholders from the Ministry of Health, the University of the West Indies, and the Ministry of Agriculture were brought together to collaborate on drafting a proposal. Funding has been granted for one year, 30 September 2016 to 29 September 2017 for 399,854.40 USD which is approximately 52 Million Jamaica Dollars. The grant may be extended for another four years based on performance and availability of fund to up to 2,000,000 USD.
- **Immunization:** The vaccine procurement by the Ministry of Health is eight times over what has been procured over the last few years. Priority will be given to health care workers, pregnant women, children and elderly persons with chronic illnesses. Vaccination of the priority groups will be facilitated at health centres across the island. Vaccines are also accessible to the public through private physicians.
- **Public education**

Individuals who wish to obtain more information may call the Ministry of Health or the nearest health centre. Persons may also visit our website at moh.gov.jm and like and follow us on www.facebook.com/themohgovjm; <https://twitter.com/themohgovjm>; <https://instagram.com/themohgovjm>.

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