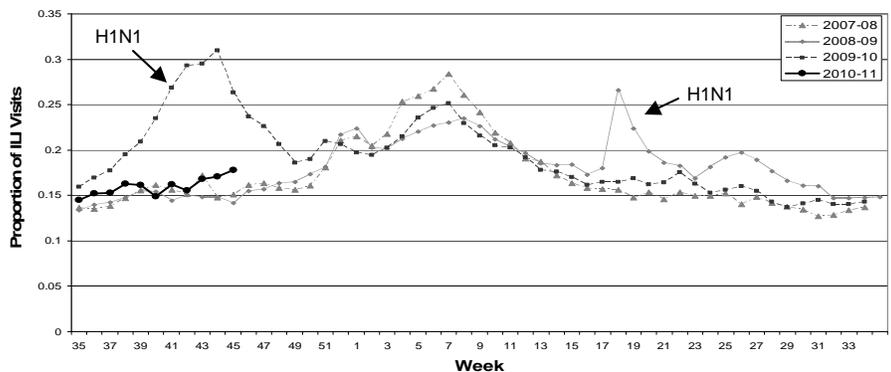


FLU ACTIVITY REMAINS LOW LOCALLY AND NATIONWIDE

Flu activity continues to circulate at low levels with only small, sporadic increases. Locally, parainfluenza is the most commonly identified respiratory virus at this time. National surveillance has identified cases due to three separate viral strains; all three are included in this year's vaccine. Vaccination should yield substantial protection against flu this year. Physicians should not delay vaccination and should encourage vaccination of all patients.

Influenza-like Illness ED visits in LA County (2007-2011)



Los Angeles County is seeing slow but steady increases in emergency department visits for influenza-like illness, typical for this time of year.

PRESYMPTOMATIC HEALTHCARE WORKER TRANSMISSION OF INFLUENZA LINKED TO TWO ACUTE CARE OUTBREAKS

An analysis of two outbreaks of pandemic H1N1 suggests the cause was presymptomatic transmission by unvaccinated healthcare workers (HCW). While the impact of asymptomatic and presymptomatic influenza is debated, the spread of influenza prior to the development of symptoms has been documented and is a concern in healthcare settings where transmission to vulnerable patients can be extremely detrimental. In 2009, LA County Public Health investigated two outbreaks in acute care settings: a hematology-oncology unit and a neonatal ICU. For both, because outside exposure was restricted and exposure was limited to select HCWs, the timeline of infections can be linked to HCWs that provided care during their initial presymptomatic stage of illness. While all the exposed NICU cases recovered, two of the hematology-oncology patients died shortly after onset of influenza illness. This study further illustrates the importance of vaccinating HCWs against influenza, especially those that provide direct care to vulnerable patients.

Marquez P, et al. Presymptomatic healthcare worker transmission of pandemic (H1N1) influenza in acute care settings, Los Angeles, 2009. Presented at the 138th APHA Annual Meeting and Conference; Denver, CO, November 9, 2010.

SEASONAL INFLUENZA RISK IN HOSPITAL HEALTHCARE WORKERS MORE STRONGLY ASSOCIATED WITH HOUSEHOLD THAN OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURES

A prospective cohort study conducted in Berlin, Germany obtained respiratory illness reports and serum samples of both healthcare workers (HCW) and non-HCWs to compare rates of influenza infection during 2006-07. Among multiple assessments, the study found that being a HCW was not a risk factor for serologically confirmed influenza infection, but living with children was a significant risk factor. Overall, their study suggests that household contacts are much more likely to spread and be a cause of influenza infection than exposure to patients. *Ed. comment.* While influenza vaccination of HCWs is assumed to reduce their own perceived occupational risk of infection, a greater focus and importance of HCW vaccination should be to protect the vulnerable patients they serve.

Williams CJ, et al. *BMC Infectious Diseases*, 2010, 10:8
www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2334/10/8

INFLUENZA PREVENTION FOR HEALTHCARE SETTINGS 2010-2011

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) recently released updated guidance for the prevention of influenza in healthcare settings. Included in these recommendations are modified precautions regarding the use of respiratory protection—as per the CDC, influenza infection control is based on standard “droplet precautions” which limits the need for aerosolizing protection (such as N95 respirators).

The October issue of *Rx for Prevention*, a clinical publication for physicians in Los Angeles County published by Public Health, contains a simple, comprehensive summary of recommendations for reducing the risk of influenza in healthcare facilities. Included are recommendations for: staff education, antiviral chemoprophylaxis, respiratory hygiene, as well as advice specific to ambulatory and inpatient care settings. Also included are quick links to supportive documentation from the CDC and other sources.

The full CDPH guidance is available at:

www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/immunize/Documents/CDPHGuidanceFluPreventionHCS20101105.pdf

The October issue of *Rx for Prevention* is available at:

<https://admin.publichealth.lacounty.gov/wwwfiles/ph/media/media/rxoct10.pdf>