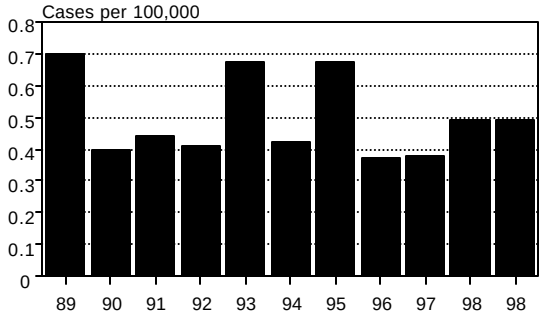
ENCEPHALITIS

CRUDE DATA	
Number of Cases	45
Annual Incidence[a]	
LA County	0.49
California	N/A
United States	N/A
Age at Onset	
Mean	27
Median	14
Range	0-82 yrs
Case Fatality	
LA County	24%[b]
United States	N/A

[a]Cases per 100,000 population.
[b]Excludes AIDS-associated cases.

Figure 22

Encephalitis
Incidence Rates by Year
Los Angeles County, 1989-1998



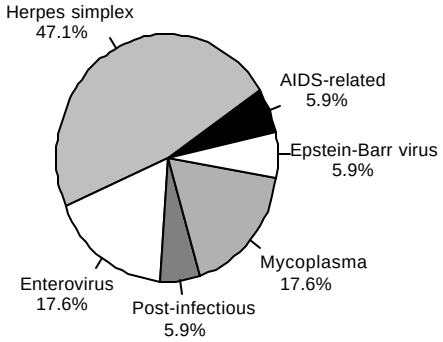
ETIOLOGY

Encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain, can result from infection with a number of different viruses, especially the arboviruses.

DISEASE ABSTRACT

Figure 23

Etiology of Encephalitis Cases, 1998



*Sixty-two percent of encephalitis etiologies were not identified.

The 1998 incidence of viral encephalitis is slightly higher than 1997, but remains in the range seen during non-epidemic years. A seasonal increase occurred in late winter to spring in 1998, which was earlier than usual compared to the previous five-year average, perhaps related to the milder winter in 1998. The highest age-specific incidence rate (2.05 cases per 100,000 population) was observed in children less than one year of age, followed by the 1-4 age group (1.32 per 100,000), then those more than 65 years (1.26 per 100,000). The male-to-female rate ratio was 1:1.4 . Hispanics and Whites had the highest crude incidence rates (each 0.46 cases per 100,000 population), followed by Blacks (0.38 cases per 100,000), and Asians (0.37 cases per 100,000). Cases of encephalitis occurred throughout Los Angeles County, with Alhambra, Foothill and Glendale Health Districts having the highest rates (1.09, 0.97, and 0.90 cases per 100,000

population, respectively).

The one reported case of St. Louis encephalitis occurred in an 83-year-old woman who reported exposure to mosquito bites while sitting on her porch in the evenings in Pomona.

COMMENTS

Despite the fact that the Public Health Laboratory provides free testing of clinical samples, few are submitted, and the etiologic agent for most cases is not identified. In 1998, the etiology was unknown for 62% of reported cases.

Of particular public health concern in LAC are the arthropod-borne (arboviral) encephalitides, especially those due to St. Louis encephalitis (SLE) and Western equine encephalitis (WEE) viruses. Since 1985, sporadic cases of SLE have been reported, following an outbreak of 16 cases in 1984. The potential for another SLE outbreak exists, as the sporadic cases in previous years and identification of SLE in sentinel animal populations indicate that the virus is now endemic in LAC. The annual mosquito-borne encephalitis surveillance program consists of surveillance for equine cases of WEE, monitoring of mosquito populations, laboratory testing of mosquitoes for WEE and SLE viruses, and twice monthly testing of sentinel chicken flocks for SLE and WEE. Elimination of standing water and proper maintenance of ponds and swimming pools decrease the available sites for hatching and maturation of mosquito larvae. The State of California Mosquito Abatement Districts monitor and control populations of these insects.