



# TARRANT

The Alberta Recording and Research Network  
*Tracking Influenza in Alberta*

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## Flu News from Down-Under



Australia has experienced a severe influenza season this year in several states, particularly Queensland and NSW. More influenza cases are reported in 2007 than 2006 and there have been 6 influenza A deaths in children under the age of five. The predominant strain circulating is influenza A(H3). After a relatively light season last year, sentinels in Alberta should be prepared for a busy season, if we get the virus that's circulating in Australia.

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The trivalent vaccine the WHO recommended for use in the 2007 Southern Hemisphere winter contained A/New Caledonia/20/99 (H1N1)-like virus, A/Wisconsin/67/2005 (H3N2)-like virus, and B/Malaysia/2506/2004-like virus. The Northern Hemisphere's winter vaccine uses the same A(H3) and B virus but includes A/Solomon Islands/3/2006 (H1N1)-like virus, which is new for this season, replacing A/New Caledonia virus from 2006/07. The publicly funded vaccines in Canada for the 2007-2008 influenza season contain the three WHO-recommended antigenic strains.

## Protective Kits for Sentinels in the CHR

At the 2006 TARRANT general meeting Brent Friesen, MOH for the Calgary Health Region, expressed interest in the program and committed his support to the region's sentinel physicians. Starting this season, disposable kits containing a gown, gloves, and a mask with a face shield will be given to sentinels in the Calgary Health Region to help prevent droplet transmission. Sentinels will receive two kits a week for routine TARRANT sampling and the kits will be sent every six weeks along with regular sampling supplies. We are making efforts to contact other MOHs from outside regions to provide the same incentives.



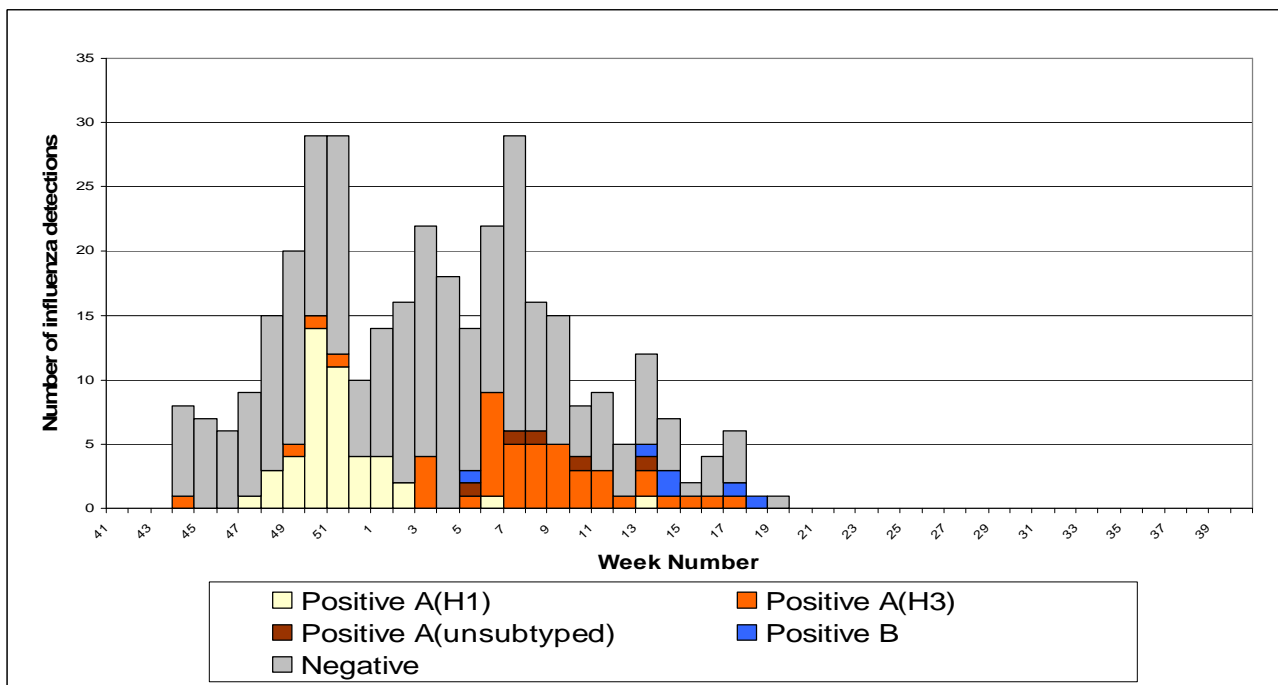
## Vaccine Effectiveness Study Update

For the 2007-2008 flu season, we will collaborate again with the British Columbia Center for Disease Control (BCCDC) to incorporate vaccine effectiveness assessment as an important component of influenza surveillance. The study period will begin November 1 and end in April. According to Elaine Sartison, from Alberta Health and Wellness, influenza vaccinations will be available mid-October. Incentives will be paid for every swab collected.



From November 2006 to April 30, 2007, 460 ILI patients were seen by Alberta sentinels. From this group, 317 (69%) were enrolled in the study and swabbed within 7 days of ILI onset. There were 97 (31%) patients positive for influenza, 91 (94%) positive for influenza A and 6 (6%) for influenza B. In total, 16% (50/317) of those enrolled in the study were vaccinated and the elderly (>=65 years of age) made up 5% (16/317) of those in the study. Figure 1 shows a bar graph of the subtypes collected from your data.

Last year over 70 doctors across Alberta participated in this study and this year we are aiming to have more than 100 doctors. Stay tuned for more results.



**Figure 1. Sentinel influenza detection, AB (2006-2007)**

*AB experienced biphasic influenza activity consisting primarily of A/H1N1 before January, and A/H3N2 after January. Source: BC Centre of Disease Control*



# Reporting and Recruitment (R&R): We need your help!

The success of a sentinel surveillance system depends on the number and spread of sentinels in the system and the level of reporting. Your efforts are greatly appreciated, but we would like to expand our current network and increase our level of reporting. In the past season, we had on average 56% of recorders reporting, with as low as 27% of the recorders reporting in a week (Figure 2).

Currently, our sentinels only make up less than 3.5% of the primary care physicians within the health regions. Table 1. shows the percentage of sentinels represented by each region.

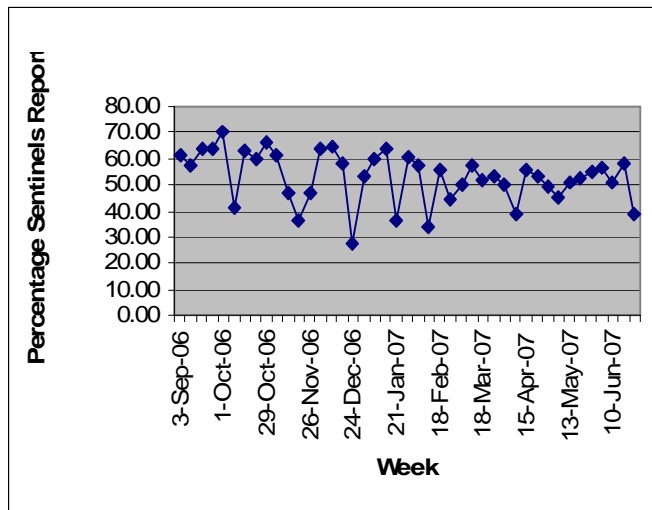



Figure 2. Sentinel reporting rate





## A Gap in Our System!!

Capital Health family doctors serve more than 31.1% of the population of Alberta but we only have less than 0.39% of primary care physicians doctors in Capital Health Region.

More concerning, Northern Lights has 0 primary care physicians reporting

### So what does this all mean?

- The data is not representative of some regions and there is a greater chance of erroneous trends.
- A limited surveillance system delays the detection of epidemics and changes in circulating virus strains.

### So what can be done about this?

We need your help to reach family care physicians in your region to participate in our surveillance program. If you know of any physicians who are interested, please contact us ([Tarrant@ucalgary.ca](mailto:Tarrant@ucalgary.ca))



# TARRANT

## Goals for the next season:

Increase your sentinel weekly reporting rate to 100%

Expand our current sentinel network from 50 to 60.

With your dedicated effort, we can reach these goals and make our surveillance network bigger and better for the next season!!



Region	N Sentinels/ N Primary Care Region	N Primary Care Regions	% of Counts
Chinook	5	172	2.90
Palliser	3	91	3.30
Calgary Health Region	22	1496	1.47
David Thompson	8	293	2.73
East Central	1	93	1.07
Capital	5	1285	0.39
Aspen	3	171	1.75
Peace Country	3	108	2.77
Northern Lights	0	45	0

**Table 1: Percentage of Sentinels Represented by Each Region**

Note: Percentage of sentinels is reported as number of sentinels per number of primary care physicians within the region. Source: College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta.

(Viewed on 16/8/2007 [http://www.cpsa.ab.ca/findaphysician/medical\\_directory.asp](http://www.cpsa.ab.ca/findaphysician/medical_directory.asp))

## One last thing.....

Don't forget to complete our survey at the end of this newsletter. We would like to find out information about what you think about TARRANT and how we can make the program better for your practice. It should take you less than 5 min to fill out the survey. **There will be a random draw to win 1 of 10 gift certificates from Starbucks/Tim Hortons for the sentinels who fax us their response before the end of September!!** Good luck!

Thank you!!!



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