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Influenza - U.S.S.R., Hong Kong

On December 7, 1977 the Minister of Health of the USSR informed the World Health Organization that several moderate outbreaks of influenza had occurred throughout the country. The illness was of moderate clinical severity and affected mostly children and young adults. Some strains isolated during the outbreak are similar to A/Victoria/3/75 and A/Texas/1/77, but there are others reported to be related to the virus A/FM/1/47 (H1N1), the 1947 prototype strain of the H1 series. Viruses of this subtype were present throughout the world from 1947 to 1957 and are different from the strain of swine influenza A (HSW1N1). In the same week reports were received from Hong Kong of influenza outbreaks of moderate intensity which have also affected children and young adults. The viruses isolated were again found to be related to A/FM/1/47 (H1N1). The A (H1N1) isolates have been sent from the USSR and Hong Kong to the WHO Collaborating Centers for influenza in London and Atlanta for further characterization. The WHO Collaborating Center for influenza, London, has already confirmed that strains from Hong Kong were related to A/FM/1/47 (H1N1). Further information concerning the new strain A (H1N1) will be made available as soon as possible.

(Reported by World Health Organization in the Weekly Epidemiological Record 52 50, 1977)

EDITORIAL NOTE: The influenza A (H1N1) group of viruses have not been isolated in the United States for 20 years. Thus far this season, the majority of U.S. isolates have been A/Texas/1/77-like, with a few isolations of the A/Victoria/3/75-like strains. Currently recommended vaccines should continue to be used. Laboratory characterization of the H1N1 strains is in progress for selection of appropriate strains should a new vaccine be required for future use.

(Reported by the WHO Collaborating Center for Influenza Bureau of Labs., Bureau of State Services, Center for Disease Control)

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