



Bulletin No. 27

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## Influenza Strikes Fairbanks - First Outbreak In Nation Again

For the second year in a row, the first influenza outbreaks in the United States have been documented in Alaska. In 1982-83, the nation's first documented outbreaks of influenza occurred in Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Glennallen, caused by A/Bangkok/79 (H3N2) (Epidemiology Bulletin Number 22, Week Ending October 29, 1983). Now, the nation's first influenza outbreak in the 1983-84 influenza season has been documented in Fairbanks.

Since November 15, 1983, the Northern Regional Laboratory has isolated Influenza A/Philippines/82 (antigenic type H3N2) virus from throat cultures taken from four Fairbanks patients. Symptoms in these two adults and two children included coryza, generalized myalgia, headache, persistent cough, and fever to 102°F. White blood cell studies showed a mild lymphocytosis. The four culture-confirmed patients described similar illness in spouses, siblings, and close friends.

Physicians surveyed about illness in their Fairbanks practices described illness with influenza-like symptoms occurring predominantly among adults in their mid-20's to 40's. Nausea and slight diarrhea were said to be part of the spectrum of illness in many cases. Day-care centers and schools surveyed reported that, although absenteeism was increased slightly, it appeared primarily to be associated with gastroenteritis. When resurveyed in mid-December, physicians and the Fairbanks Health Center said that they were seeing many young adults with fever and cough. Some Fairbanks schools reported illness in older students that was characterized by headaches, fever and sore throat. Similar illness was reported at a low level by daycare centers. School and daycare absenteeism did not appear to be at levels greater than expected for the time of year.

Although there have been reports of influenza-like illness during recent weeks from several Alaska communities, all cultures positive for Influenza A have come from Fairbanks. The extent of influenza-like illness outside Fairbanks is not great as yet. While a few sporadic cultures have been received by the National Centers For Disease Control from other areas of the country, since September 1983, Fairbanks has been the only United States community to have experienced epidemic Influenza A.

Based on trends thus far, it is not possible to determine the level or nature of influenza activity to be expected during the remainder of the 1983-84 season. During some seasons a single antigenic strain predominates, while during others a variety of strains produce illness. We would like to encourage all physicians and other health care providers to keep a sharp look out for influenza. Viral transport medium is available free of charge through the Virology-Rabies Laboratory, Northern Regional Laboratory, Fairbanks. We are extremely interested in obtaining viral cultures to document the presence of influenza and to identify prevalent strains. Outbreaks of suspected influenza should be reported to Tom Kosatsky, M.D., or John Middaugh, M.D., Epidemiology Office, Anchorage, (907) 561-4406.

(Reported by the Virology-Rabies Laboratory, Northern Regional Laboratory, Fairbanks; Ruthann Berrian, P.H.N., Fairbanks Health Center, Fairbanks; D. Thieman, M.D., R. Howard, PA-C, J.T. Foote, M.D., C. Binder, CP-NP, Tanana Valley Clinic, Fairbanks; E. Elsner, M.D., University of Alaska Medical Center, Fairbanks)