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## INFLUENZA UPDATE - ALASKA

During this 1983-1984 influenza season, influenza virus types A (H1N1), A (H3N2), and B have been isolated in Alaska. The nation's first 1983-1984 influenza season outbreak, caused by influenza virus type A (H3N2), that began in Fairbanks in November diminished in December. Most of the influenza-like illness in Fairbanks was reported among adults in their mid-20's to 40's. Relatively little influenza-like illness was noted in children; school and day care absenteeism rates did not increase. In early December, sporadic influenza-like illness was reported from Anchorage and Bethel.

In January 1984 a major outbreak of influenza caused by influenza virus type A (H1N1) occurred initially in Anchorage and later spread throughout the state. School-aged children were most heavily affected; classroom absenteeism rates of 50% or higher were commonly reported, particularly in grades 7-9. In addition to widespread influenza A (H1N1), sporadic cases of influenza virus types A (H3N2) and B continued to occur throughout the state. The elderly have experienced less illness than school-age children in this season's influenza outbreaks.

## INFLUENZA STRIKES ALASKA SCHOOLS

An explosive outbreak of upper respiratory illness struck Romig Jr. High School (grades 7-8) in Anchorage on January 12, 1984. The school nurse reported that 146 of 754 enrolled students were absent that day; an additional 95 students were seen by her and sent home due to abrupt onset of illness during the school day. On Friday, January 13, 342 of 754 (45%) students were absent. By Monday, January 16, 396 (52%) of Romig Jr. High students had been absent at least one day. The illness was characterized by the following symptoms:

Cough	(75%)	Runny Nose	(48%)
Headache	(72%)	Muscle aches	(41%)
Fever	(67%)	Nausea	(39%)
Sore throat	(63%)	Vomiting	(17%)
Weakness	(56%)	Diarrhea	(15%)
Chills	(53%)		

The illness, characterized by abrupt onset, proved to be of short duration: 24 of 62 students absent 1/11/84/recovered by 1/13/84; and 46 of 241 students absent 1/12/84 recovered by 1/13/84. Secondary cases were observed within 2-4 days among siblings and parents of affected school-aged children. Illness was milder among adults.

Surveillance was established in Anchorage schools to monitor student absenteeism. Within 1 week of the outbreak at Romig Jr. High, 22 Anchorage schools were affected with reported absenteeism ranging from 15-30%, compared to a baseline pre-outbreak average absenteeism of 5-8%.

Private physicians participated enthusiastically in investigation of the outbreak, obtaining viral cultures on children with acute symptoms and reporting information on numbers of patients seen, ages, and schools affected. Cultures obtained from children from several schools were positive for influenza virus type A (H1N1).

Following the widespread outbreak in Anchorage, influenza-like illness spread throughout Alaska. Surveillance cultures positive for influenza virus type A (H1N1) were obtained from Fairbanks, Bethel, Eielson AFB, Ft. Wainwright, Juneau, and Petersburg. Illness has, in general, been mild. No deaths are known to have occurred; no cases of Reye's Syndrome have been reported. As observed in the rest of the United States, influenza-like illness has occurred less frequently among the elderly.

(Reported by Virology-Rabies Laboratory, Northern Regional Laboratory, Fairbanks; Ruthann Berrian, PHN, Fairbanks Health Center; Pat Rodgers, PHN, Northern Regional Nursing Manager; John Tower, M.D., Charles Ryan, M.D., Thad Woodard, M.D., Linda Ekman, M.D., William Browner, M.D., John Kleeman, M.D., Anchorage; Betty Mason, R.N., Janice Heckman, R.N., and the Anchorage School District Nurses; Ken Moss, M.D., Juneau, Keith Dobyns, M.D., Petersburg.)