

Influenza Mortality by Season

Findings from the Alberta Health 2014-2015 Seasonal Influenza Report

Mortality is one indicator of the severity of an influenza season. The rate of influenza-associated deaths varies from season to season. Influenza mortality is estimated using the cause of death in Vital Statistics death registration records, and therefore can be readily compared from season to season.

Today's *Health Trends Alberta* compares influenza mortality rates back to the 1984-1985 influenza season. Vital Statistics data, with the cause of death coded, is not yet available for the full 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 seasons. As a result, the number of fatalities among hospitalized influenza cases has been used, resulting in an underestimate of the true mortality rate for these seasons.

Influenza mortality in 2014 – 2015 highest since the 1999 – 2000 season

To date, there have been 89 cases where influenza caused or contributed to death in the 2014-2015 season; a rate of 2.2 deaths per 100,000 population. This is the highest it has been since the 1997-1998, 1998-1999, and 1999-2000 seasons, when antigenic drift produced a new antigenic variant of H3N2 (A/Sydney/5/97). This new strain was believed to be introduced to Canada from an outbreak on a cruise ship.

The majority (96 per cent) of deaths this season have been among seniors with the elderly over age 80 affected most. The mortality rate is 5.7 and 56.5 per 100,000 for those aged 65-79 and 80 and older, respectively. The mortality rate in working-age adults (20-64) is 0.15 per 100,000. This pattern was consistent with lab-confirmed influenza cases and the distribution of influenza outbreaks by facility type. More detail can be found www.health.alberta.ca/professionals/influenza-evidence.html.

