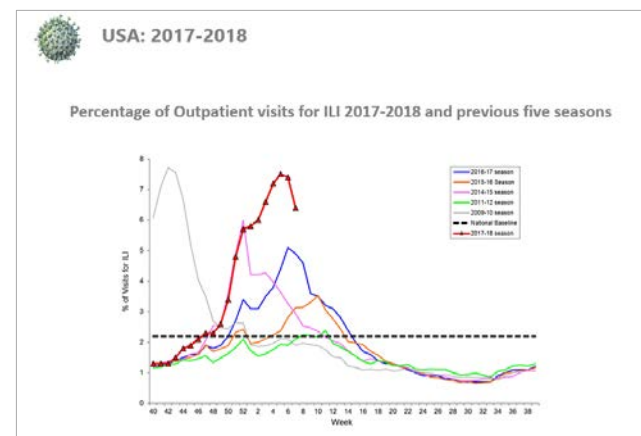
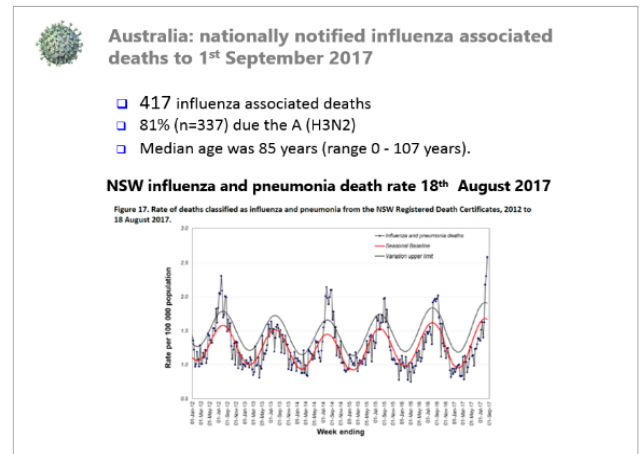


CANTERBURY PRIMARY RESPONSE GROUP UPDATE

Wednesday 14th March 2018

Important information for all GP teams, Community Pharmacists, Community Nursing and Aged Care Facilities – Please share this with everyone in your team

- In Australia last year the 2017 winter influenza season caused high rates of hospitalisation and higher fatality rates in the elderly than normal. This was due to a strain of Influenza Type A H3N2 that was not covered well with the annual influenza vaccination.
- Over the northern hemisphere winter the same strain caused a very high health burden particularly in the USA and the United Kingdom. It was coined the “Australian Flu”.
- Media reports in the USA have been attributing up to 4,000 deaths weekly to influenza. Levels of influenza-like-illness (ILI) are being reported there as high as the peak of the 2009 swine flu pandemic.
- In New Zealand the 2018 influenza vaccine has been modified to include an extra Influenza type B strain to become a quadrivalent vaccine, felt to be the best fit for what the northern hemisphere has just experienced. Due to these changes supplies have been delayed and are expected mid-April.
- In Canterbury over the last two winters the influenza waves were very mild. Community and Public Health monitoring since early 2000’s shows a trend of a mild season followed by a high season the following year. We have seldom had two low seasons in a row and if 2018 is true to the trend we would expect a high season this year.
- As well, in the past we have witnessed high flu activity in the Northern Hemisphere which is then followed by a similar, almost identical, high season in Canterbury. The concern this year is that without extra planning and foresight in our practices, pharmacies, community and residential care facilities we could be faced with very high demand that causes stress on our whole health system in 2018.
- Given this situation you are encouraged to begin your winter capacity plans early, including:
 - Vaccination programmes for both your staff and patients.
 - Consider limiting holidays of doctors and staff over the likely busiest months (July – September).
 - Nearer winter, changing booking systems to allow for same day triaged appointments and/or extended hours.
 - Ensuring good signage, masks, alcohol hand-wash availability for all presenting with coughs and colds.
- We will keep monitoring the international and national situation and update you regularly as winter approaches.



Kind regards,

Dr Phil Schroeder
Canterbury Primary Response Group

Go to our website for primary care emergency planning help and news:

www.primaryhealthresponse.org.nz