

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, NSW: MARCH 2001

TRENDS

Notifications of communicable diseases in January 2001 were mainly in line with seasonal expectations (Figure 9, Table 3). Case reports of the **arboviruses**, Ross River virus and Barmah Forest infections, rose with the onset of summer, but have yet to reach the heights of previous seasons. Case reports of **pertussis** continue to decline, and monthly notifications of **hepatitis A** have remained relatively low for two years. This month we have included a graph of **new HIV diagnoses** reported by reference laboratories in NSW. The fall-off in notifications of HIV in recent months most likely reflects reporting delays. Despite month-to-month fluctuations, these data suggest a fairly consistent rate of new HIV infections in NSW over time.

MURRAY VALLEY ENCEPHALITIS VIRUS ACTIVITY IN WESTERN NSW

Murray Valley Encephalitis (MVE) is a potentially serious infection caused by a flavivirus that is transmitted by mosquitoes. Only one in approximately 1,000 persons infected will develop symptoms that include headache, neck stiffness, fever, tremor, weakness, confusion, fitting, and sometimes coma and death. It occurs at low level endemicity in north-western Australia, and is rare in NSW. The last occurrence in NSW was in 1974, as part of a nation-wide outbreak that led to approximately 58 cases, five of whom were infected in NSW. Thirteen people died.¹

Following the 1974 outbreak, an early-warning system for detecting the presence of flaviviruses was developed. Sentinel flocks of chickens are placed at various locations in inland NSW. The chickens' blood samples are tested weekly for antibodies to flaviviruses, including MVE and Kunjin. Mosquitos are also trapped for identification, quantification and virus isolation. Until February 2001, MVE had never been identified in the NSW chickens, or isolated from mosquitoes, since the program began 12 years ago. MVE has not been identified in people in NSW with encephalitis since 1974.

On the 15th February, testing (at the Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research, Westmead Hospital, and also at the University of Western Australia) confirmed that MVE virus had been detected in the sentinel chicken flocks in remote western NSW: in two chickens from Menindee, two from Macquarie Marshes and one from Wanaaring. Other chickens in the affected flocks also seroconverted to Kunjin virus. On 21 February, further testing of the chickens indicated ongoing flavivirus activity in the Macquarie Marshes, and also detected activity at Bourke (also in western NSW).

In response, the public health units in the affected areas provided advice to local hospitals to report suspected human infection. No human clinical cases of MVE or

Kunjin virus infection have been identified to date (late February). The NSW Department of Health provided a media warning that MVE is likely to be present in NSW and that people in those areas should take personal protection measures to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes. Surveillance continues.

REFERENCE

1. Forbes JA. *Murray Valley encephalitis 1974 and The epidemic variance since 1914 and predisposing rainfall patterns*. Sydney: Australasian Medical Publishing, 1978.

NSW PUBLIC HEALTH BULLETIN

The *NSW Public Health Bulletin* is a publication of the NSW Department of Health.

The editor is Dr Lynne Madden, Manager, Public Health Training and Development Unit.

Dr Michael Giffin is managing editor.

The *Bulletin* aims to provide its readers with population health data and information to support effective public health action.

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Articles, news and comments should be 1000 words or less in length and include a summary of the key points to be made in the first paragraph. References should be set out in the Vancouver style, described in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1997; 336: 309–315. Send submitted articles on paper and in electronic form, either on disc (Word for Windows is preferred), or by email. The article must be accompanied by a letter signed by all authors. Full instructions for authors are available on request from the managing editor.

Editorial correspondence

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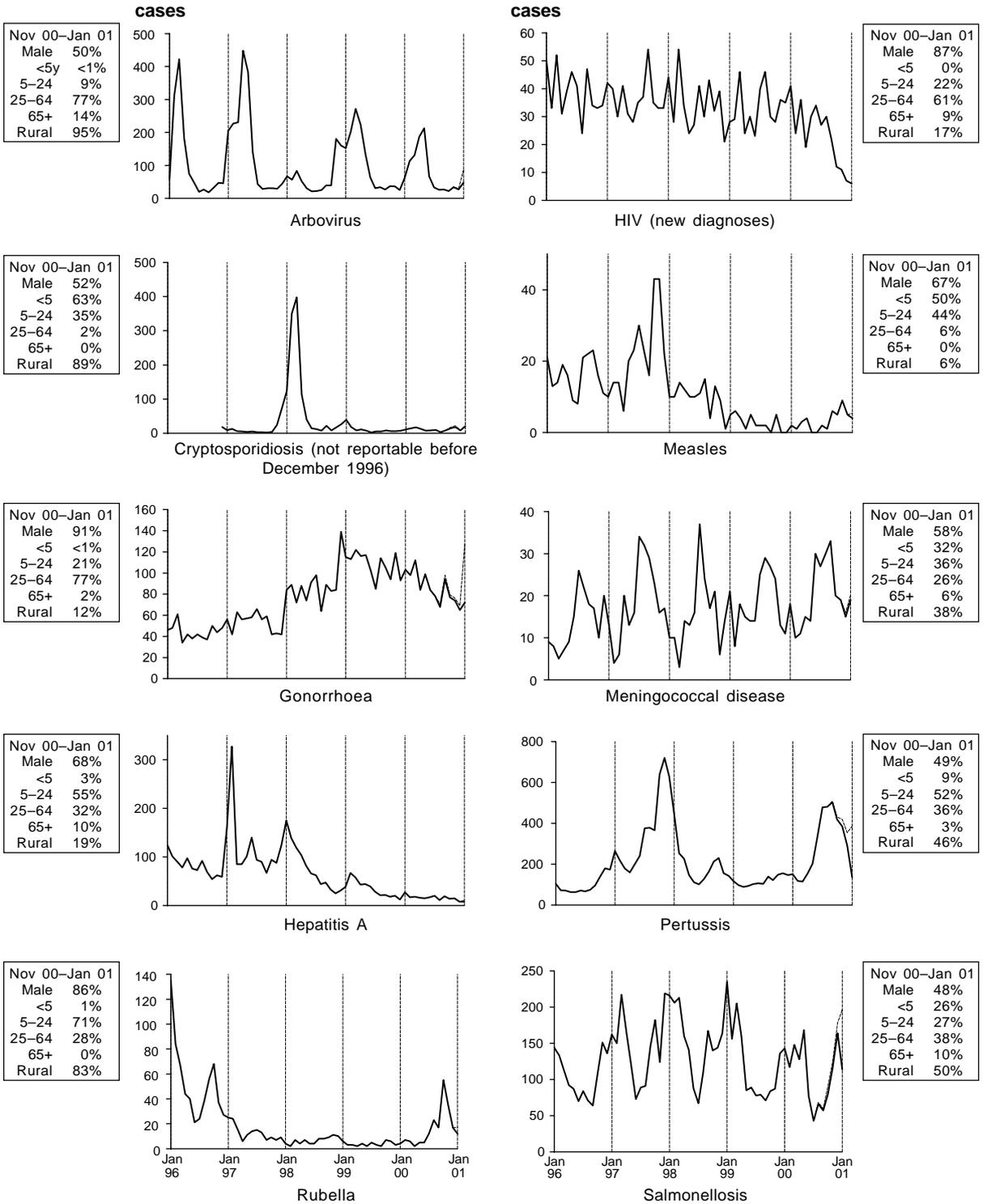


FIGURE 9

REPORTS OF SELECTED COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, NSW, JANUARY 1996 TO JANUARY 2001, BY MONTH OF ONSET

These are preliminary data: case counts for recent months may increase because of reporting delays. Laboratory-confirmed cases, except for measles, meningococcal disease and pertussis — actual — predicted after adjusting for likely reporting delays

NSW population	
Male	50%
<5	7%
5-24	28%
25-64	52%
65+	13%
Rural*	42%



* For definition, see *NSW Public Health Bulletin*, April 2000

TABLE 3 REPORTS OF NOTIFIABLE CONDITIONS RECEIVED IN JANUARY 2001 BY AREA HEALTH SERVICES

Condition	Area Health Service (2001)																	Total		
	CSA	NSA	WSA	WEN	SWS	CCA	HUN	ILL	SES	NRA	MNC	NEA	MAC	MWA	FWA	GMA	SA	CHS	for Jan†	To date†
Blood-borne and sexually transmitted																				
AIDS	6	3	2	-	2	2	-	4	4	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	26	26
HIV infection*	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6
Hepatitis B - acute viral*	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	5	5
Hepatitis B - other*	2	30	58	7	129	13	6	5	46	-	1	3	2	3	4	1	3	-	314	314
Hepatitis C - acute viral*	-	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	8	8
Hepatitis C - other*	2	44	126	36	99	53	45	30	114	37	23	24	7	16	5	10	18	40	732	732
Hepatitis D - unspecified*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hepatitis, acute viral (not otherwise specified)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chancroid*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chlamydia (genital)*	2	27	35	13	9	5	26	10	91	11	8	12	4	2	10	12	4	-	282	282
Gonorrhoea*	-	11	6	1	10	-	2	2	56	2	1	3	-	-	3	-	1	-	100	100
Syphilis	14	-	5	-	9	-	-	-	16	1	2	1	1	1	1	-	1	1	54	54
Vector-borne																				
Arboviral infection (BFV)*	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	3	5	1	-	-	1	-	1	-	14	14
Arboviral infection (RRV)*	-	2	1	-	-	-	2	1	1	3	3	9	3	2	2	7	-	-	36	36
Arboviral infection (Other)*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Malaria*	-	-	1	-	2	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	11	11
Zoonoses																				
Anthrax	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brucellosis*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leptospirosis*	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	7	7
Lyssavirus	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Psittacosis	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Q fever*	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	4	1	3	1	3	1	1	-	-	17	17
Respiratory and other																				
Blood lead level*	-	-	-	4	3	1	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	8	3	-	-	22	22
Influenza	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Invasive Pneumococcal Infection	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	5
Legionnaires' Longbeachae*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Legionnaires' Pneumophila*	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Legionnaires' (Other)*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leprosy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Meningococcal infection (invasive)	2	2	2	-	1	1	5	3	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	2	-	23	23
Mycobacterial tuberculosis	3	13	3	1	4	-	-	-	8	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	34	34
Mycobacteria other than TB	12	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	16	16
Vaccine-preventable																				
Adverse event after immunisation	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
H.influenzae b infection (invasive)*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Measles	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Mumps*	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	4
Pertussis	14	30	41	20	33	9	53	9	27	11	5	17	12	15	-	10	5	-	311	311
Rubella*	3	-	-	1	-	-	11	1	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	19	19
Tetanus	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Faecal-oral																				
Botulism	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cholera*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cryptosporidiosis*	-	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1	6	3	1	3	-	-	-	3	-	20	20
Giardiasis*	-	6	9	4	5	3	4	1	16	6	2	6	2	1	-	2	-	-	67	67
Food borne illness (not otherwise specified)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gastroenteritis (in an institution)	-	26	1	-	-	-	51	-	2	-	-	17	-	-	-	-	-	-	97	97
Haemolytic uraemic syndrome	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Hepatitis A*	1	-	2	-	3	-	2	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	11	11
Hepatitis E*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Listeriosis*	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Salmonellosis (not otherwise specified)*	-	15	16	16	22	6	11	12	22	23	14	4	5	8	5	3	2	-	184	184
Shigellosis	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Typhoid and paratyphoid*	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Verotoxin producing Ecoli*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

* lab-confirmed cases only † includes cases with unknown postcode

CSA = Central Sydney Area	WEN = Wentworth Area	HUN = Hunter Area	NRA = Northern Rivers Area	MAC = Macquarie Area	GMA = Greater Murray Area
NSA = Northern Sydney Area	SWS = South Western Sydney Area	ILL = Illawarra Area	MNC = North Coast Area	MWA = Mid Western Area	SA = Southern Area
WSA = Western Sydney Area	CCA = Central Coast Area	SES = South Eastern Sydney Area	NEA = New England Area	FWA = Far West Area	CHS = Corrections Health Service