

“While the fight against COVID-19 is ongoing, it is important to realise that other diseases have not disappeared and are still with us.”

Jan Kynčl, GII guest editor

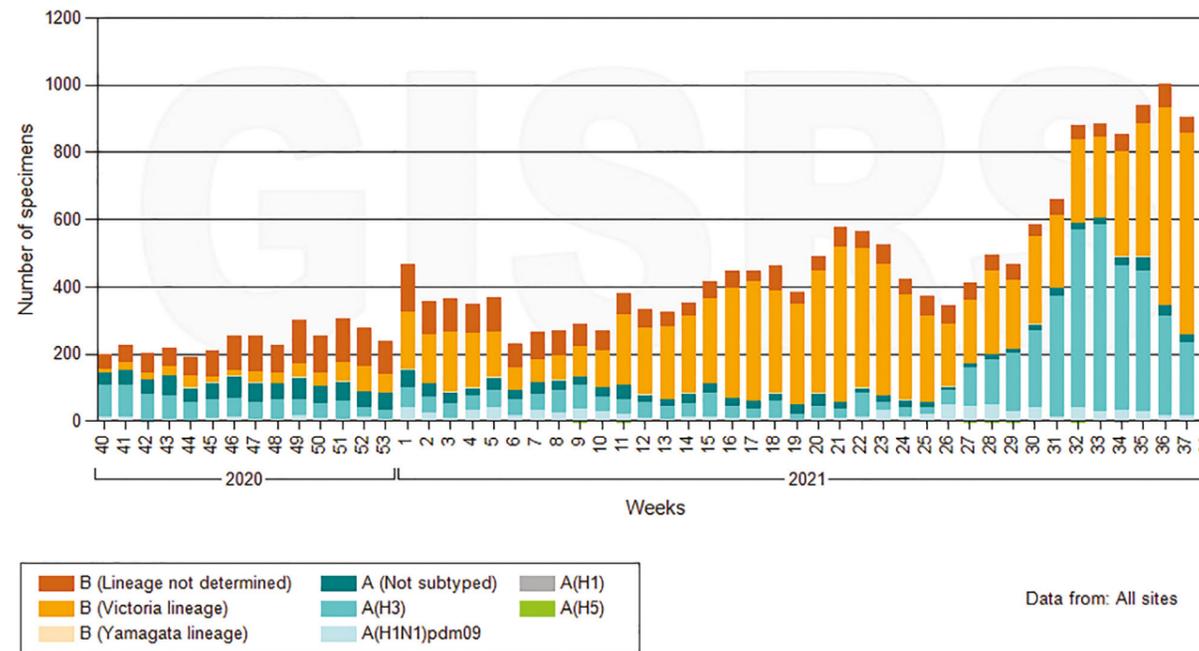


Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have likely contributed to reduced global circulation of influenza.<sup>1</sup>



However, as 2021 rolls on, with COVID-19 restrictions easing and vaccination uptake increasing, the global circulation of influenza has increased.<sup>2</sup>

Number of specimens positive for influenza by subtype



Source: Global circulation of influenza viruses. WHO FluNet; 2021. <https://www.who.int/tools/fluNet>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, surveillance systems have adapted to detect SARS-CoV-2 and other respiratory viruses including influenza:



The GISRS has been an effective resource for monitoring SARS-CoV-2.<sup>3</sup>



The Sentinelles criteria of respiratory infections were adapted for monitoring of COVID-19 and other respiratory epidemics.<sup>4</sup>



CDC guidance recommends multiplex testing, if available, when SARS-CoV-2 and influenza are co-circulating.<sup>5</sup>

A US-based projection study suggests that a large outbreak may occur with relaxation of NPIs, due to accumulation of susceptible individuals.<sup>6</sup>



COVID-19 NPIs could have a ripple effect, with influenza epidemics continuing for several years.<sup>6</sup>

Epidemic size and frequency will depend on duration of immunity.<sup>6</sup>

The Academy of Medical Sciences has warned about RSV and influenza outbreaks during autumn / winter 2021–2022, which could place a high burden on the healthcare system.<sup>7</sup>

The Academy of Medical Sciences recommendations include joint testing of RSV, influenza and COVID-19, uptake of vaccines, primary care resourcing, and continuing with NPIs.<sup>7,8</sup>

Craven *et al.* have proposed a five-pillar system to prepare for future pandemics.<sup>9</sup>



Investing in such a system could enable a more rapid and targeted response to future pandemics and reduce their devastating effects.<sup>9</sup>

For further information, see issue 5 of InFluNews from the Global Influenza Initiative, available here: [www.nivel.nl/en/FluCov](http://www.nivel.nl/en/FluCov)

References. 1. WHO. Influenza Update 400. Available at: <https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/surveillance-and-monitoring/influenza-updates/current-influenza-update>. Accessed October 2021. 2. WHO. FluNet. Available at: <https://www.who.int/tools/fluNet>. Accessed October 2021. 3. WHO. Influenza COVID-19 interface. Available at: <https://www.who.int/teams/global-influenza-programme/influenza-covid19>. Accessed October 2021. 4. Sentinelles. COVID-19 and influenza surveillance: Role of the Sentinelles network. Available at: <http://www.sentiweb.fr/france/en/>. Accessed October 2021. 5. CDC. Influenza (flu). Information for clinicians on influenza virus testing. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals/diagnosis/index.htm>. Accessed October 2021. 6. Qi Y, *et al.* Quantifying the impact of COVID-19 non-pharmaceutical interventions on influenza transmission in the United States, *The Journal of Infectious Diseases* 2021; jia485, <https://doi.org/10.1093/infdis/jiab485>. 7. Burki TK, *et al.* Circulation of influenza, RSV, and SARS-CoV-2: An uncertain season ahead. *Lancet Respir Med* 2021; S2213-2600(21)00364-7. 8. The Academy of Medical Sciences. COVID-19: Preparing for the future. July 2021. 9. Craven M, *et al.* McKinsey & Company. Not the last pandemic: Investing now to reimagine public-health systems. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/not-the-last-pandemic-investing-now-to-reimagine-public-health-systems>. Accessed October 2021.