

OXFORD-RCGP RSC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



YOUR WEEKLY UPDATE FROM PROF. SIMON DE LUSIGNAN,
DIRECTOR OF THE OXFORD-RCGP RSC

Weathering the Change: Summer Respiratory Health in Focus

Last week brought unseasonably hot temperatures; this week, heavy rain and thunderstorms have dominated the forecast. These rapid weather changes are a useful reminder that **seasonal respiratory health concerns do not disappear when winter ends.**

As we move into summer, practices may wish to remain alert to weather-related respiratory presentations, ensure patients with asthma have up-to-date management plans and inhalers, and continue to consider respiratory sampling where clinically indicated. **Seasonal surveillance remains important year-round**, even when the conditions driving respiratory illness begin to change.

Continued vigilance is particularly valuable during periods of rapidly changing weather, when shifts in temperature, humidity and pollen levels can influence patterns of illness presenting in primary care. **Accurate clinical coding also plays a crucial role.**

Recording diagnoses, symptoms and relevant presentations using SNOMED CT codes enables the Oxford-RCGP Research and Surveillance Centre (RSC) network to monitor emerging trends in near real time, helping to build a clearer picture of population health and support UKHSA with timely public health responses. **Every coded consultation contributes to the quality and usefulness of this surveillance data**, strengthening our collective ability to identify and respond to seasonal health challenges.

Biennial Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences conference

The biennial Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences conference, held on 3 June 2026, focused on **Improving Health, Transforming Lives**, reflecting the department's 2025–2030 strategy. A key message was the need for more accessible, community-based healthcare, with greater emphasis on prevention, early detection, and supporting people to manage their own health.

This aligns closely with the work of the Practice Liaison Officers within the Oxford-RCGP Research and Surveillance Centre. Through our **partnerships with GP practices**, we support the collection of surveillance data and virology samples that enable the early detection of circulating viruses and other infectious diseases. These data contribute to outbreak monitoring, pandemic preparedness, vaccine effectiveness research, and public health decision-making.

We also help connect primary care, research, and public health by providing practices with timely information on disease trends and virology results. In doing so, the Oxford-RCGP RSC **supports prevention, early intervention**, and the effective use of primary care data to improve health outcomes. If you would like to know more, please feel free to reach out to our [PLO team](#).

We are hosting our first-ever Oxford-RCGP RSC Roadshow

A unique opportunity to connect, collaborate, and gain insight into the work that drives our network forward.

We will be hosting two events in **July**. The first will take place in **Oxford** on the **3rd** and the second, in **London** on the **21st**.

These exclusive events will bring together both current and prospective practices for valuable face-to-face engagement with the team behind the scenes. Attendees will hear directly from key voices shaping our programme, including:

- **Prof. Simon de Lusignan**, Medical Director
- Our dedicated **Practice Liaison Officers**
- Representatives from **UKHSA** and the **Royal College of General Practitioners**
- Researchers, Clinicians and practice representatives sharing real-world experience

The events are open to the entire network. For anyone willing to travel, you are more than welcome.

There are limited spaces, so please register as early as possible. For fairness, we ask that you only register for one of the dates and limit site representatives to 1-2 people. Lunch will be provided.

It's not too late to sign up for the Roadshows. Follow this [link](#), for more information.

Sampling Is Informing

Welcome to the newest segment of our weekly newsletter.

Asthma, Hay fever and Thunderstorm Asthma

This week we note an interesting contrast between asthma and hay fever in the attached graphs. While peaks in asthma exacerbations are typically seen during the winter months, hay fever follows the opposite pattern, with a pronounced seasonal peak around ISO week 24 (early to mid-June).

These trends highlight the value of reviewing asthma patients when their symptoms are most stable, allowing treatment to be optimised ahead of the next winter season. However, the strong atopic overlap between asthma and hay fever means that many patients experience both conditions and may have little respite from symptoms throughout the year.

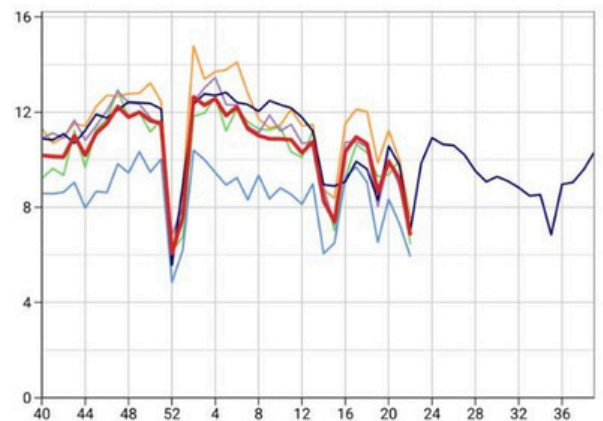
The relationship between these conditions is particularly relevant given this week's dramatic shift in weather, from heatwave conditions to thunderstorms. This brings to mind the rare but potentially serious phenomenon of thunderstorm asthma, which is most commonly seen in people with asthma and hay fever during periods of high pollen. A PubMed article describes a 30-hour period in June 1994 during which 640 patients attended London A&E departments with acute asthma associated with thunderstorm activity.

As periods of extreme weather become more frequent, it is worth remaining aware of this phenomenon, particularly during the pollen season.

This PubMed article can be found by following the link:

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5410411/>

■ National ■ 5 Year Avg ■ London ■ North ■ South ■ Midlands And East
Asthma (ICD10: J45-J46)
Weekly incidence (per 100,000 all ages) by region for 2025/26 compared with 5 year average



Hayfever / Allergic Rhinitis (ICD10: J30)
Weekly incidence (per 100,000 all ages) by region for 2025/26 compared with 5 year average

