

July 2026 / ISSUE 306

OXFORD-RCGP RSC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



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

Updates from the RSC - Surveillance Team

Supporting practices through on-site training

At our Roadshow last Friday, it was encouraging to hear that several member practices expressed an interest in receiving on-site support from our Practice Liaison Officers (PLOs). These visits provide an opportunity for tailored training, allowing practice teams to build confidence in our serology and virology sampling pathways, ask questions, and discuss any challenges they may be experiencing.

We would like to remind all practices participating in our serology and virology sampling programmes that this support is available to everyone. Our PLOs are happy to visit your practice to provide training that meets the needs of your team, whether you're new to the programme or simply looking for a refresher.

Practices consistently tell us that these sessions are engaging, practical, and valuable for bringing teams together around best practice. If your practice would benefit from an on-site visit, please don't hesitate to get in touch—we'd be delighted to arrange a convenient time.



Summer Reminder for Serology Sampling Practices

With the extremely hot weather, we'd like to remind serology sampling practices that blood samples are more likely to haemolyse during transit if exposed to higher temperatures.

To reduce the risk of haemolysis, please ensure samples are kept refrigerated until posting and posted as soon as possible after collection. Haemolysed samples cannot be used by UKHSA and are therefore not eligible for payment.

Thank you for helping us maximise the number of usable samples received by the laboratory.

The RSC Roadshow Comes to Town

On Friday, 3rd July, we hosted the Oxford-RCGP RSC Roadshow taster event at St Luke's Chapel, Oxford.

The event brought together representatives from the Oxford-RCGP RSC, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) to showcase the Respiratory & Infectious Disease Surveillance Programme, highlighting its impact on primary care, public health and research.



Our Medical Director, Prof. Simon de Lusignan, opened the event with a presentation celebrating 60 years of respiratory and infectious disease surveillance. UKHSA representatives shared how practice sampling supports national healthcare, vaccine development and laboratory surveillance, while RCGP representative Dr Nick Thomas outlined research opportunities through the Research Ready programme and shared practical insights from his own network practice.

Oxford-RCGP RSC speakers also covered the importance of surveillance, accurate clinical coding, study implementation, patient and public involvement, practice support and sampling pathways, with attendees taking part in valuable discussions throughout the day.

As our first event of this kind, the roadshow successfully brought together network practices and key stakeholders, creating an opportunity to share knowledge, strengthen collaboration and highlight the importance of surveillance in primary care.

We would like to give special thanks to our speakers: UKHSA - Dr Jamie Lopez Bernal, Joshua Symons, Praveen Sebastianpillai and Simon Tonge. RCGP - Dr Nick Thomas. Oxford-RCGP RSC - Prof. Simon de Lusignan, Dr Uy Hoang, Dr William Elson, Dr Vanashree Sexton, Dr Timea Suli and Dominic Dunn



Sampling Is Informing

Welcome to the newest segment of our weekly newsletter

Hay fever and Allergic Rhinitis

The long periods of dry and sunny weather have not been kind to hay fever sufferers. In some parts of the country there has been little rain to wash away pollen. We can see from the data that levels of coded consultations for hay fever have been high. Looking at the five-year average, we can expect the numbers to drop down quite significantly over the next few weeks.

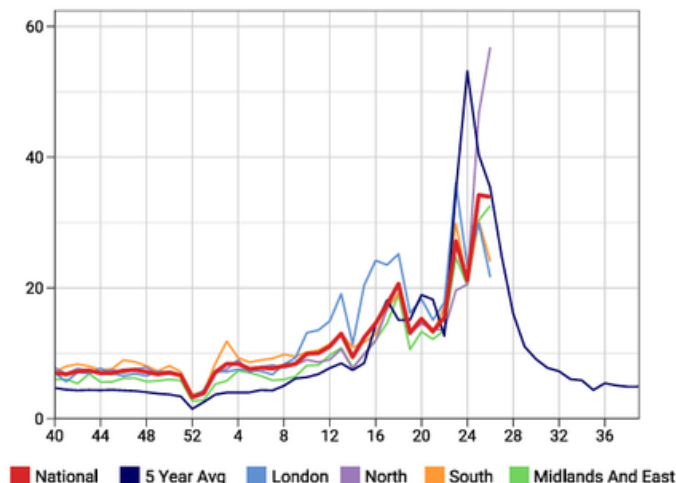
While summer is not over, what does change is the pollens that are around. The University of Worcester has produced a [pollen calendar](#) which shows that after the tree pollen of spring we are coming to the end of the grass pollen season. This may give some relief to sufferers, although those who are sensitive to nettle and other weed pollens may continue to have symptoms until September.

NICE recommend intranasal corticosteroids as well as oral or intranasal antihistamines, but avoidance of pollen is likely to be a mainstay of treatment as well. Early morning and evening have the highest pollen levels – unfortunately this is also currently the most pleasant time to be outside.

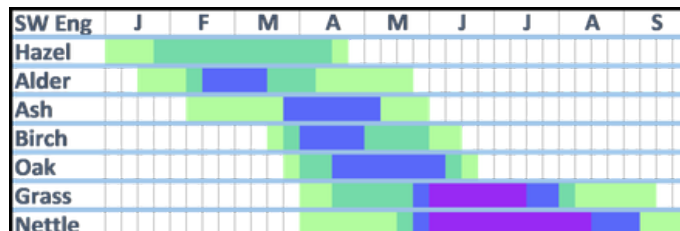
We can at least reassure that, for most hay fever sufferers, the end is in sight.

[Pollen Calendars by area - University Of Worcester](#)

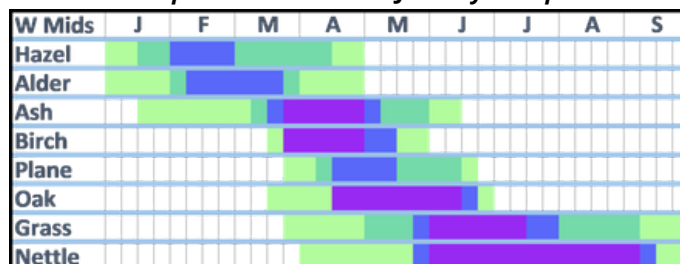
Hayfever / Allergic Rhinitis (ICD10: J30)
Weekly incidence (per 100,000 all ages) by region for 2025/26 compared with 5 year average



Pollen Graph: South West England - January to September



Pollen Graph: West Midlands - January to September



Pollen Graph: North East England - January to September

