NUFFIELD DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY CARE HEALTH SCIENCES
RCGP RESEARCH & SURVEILLANCE CENTRE

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OXFORD-RCGP RSC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

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

Week 40 is here - and so is cold and flu season!

In the Oxford-RCGP RSC calendar, week 40 marks the start of the cold and flu season. With schools back and university students returning, respiratory infections are beginning to make their presence felt. Depending on your practice and patient population, you may already be seeing more people with coughs, sniffles, sore throats and other respiratory symptoms.

Sampling practice? Swab, swab, swab!

For practices taking part in **general surveillance**, now is a great time to build sampling activity. Around **20 swabs a week** is a useful target (the more the better!), helping us build a clearer picture of the viruses circulating in communities across England. Every swab contributes to that picture: helping us track virus activity, spot changing patterns and understand how the season develops.

Not sampling yet?

If your practice is not currently taking part in virology sampling and would like to find out more, please contact the **Practice Liaison Officer (PLO) Team**. There may be capacity for additional practices to join the programme.

Meet the Oxford-RCGP RSC Team at Best Practice Birmingham 7th and 8th October

We will be at the **Best Practice** event at the NEC in Birmingham on 7 and 8 October. Come and meet us at **stand B53** to find out more about the Oxford-RCGP RSC and our virology and serology sampling programmes.

If your practice is not yet involved in sampling, we'd be happy to talk through the options and what joining the network could involve. We look forward to seeing you there!

Sampling is Informing

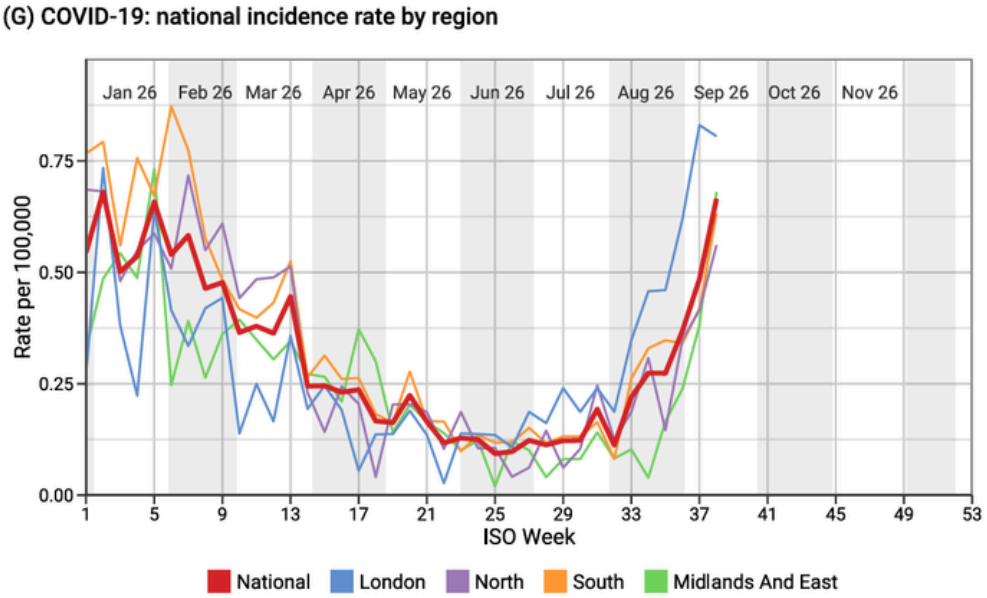
Weekly observations from our on-team GPs

Rise of ARI as autumn begins

by Dr Rashmi Wimalaratna, MBBS

We have certainly noted a rise in Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs) and Covid in particular, during the past fortnight, with this echoed in the most recent weekly report. The sharp upwards trend is quite marked across all regions in England and we have seen this reflected in our clinics too.

The current variants are not producing as severe an illness as previous seasons, but the most vulnerable patients are still at risk of a more serious illness. In accordance, the vaccination campaign has been streamlined in the UK to target care home residents, the elderly and anyone with a compromised immune system aged over 6 months. Health and care workers are no longer automatically included in this cohort: COVID-19 vaccine - NHS.

While it's early in the season, tracking these changing trends is important as it doesn't take too long for primary care and hospitals to be overwhelmed with sick patients. The UKHSA publishes data on cases and hospital admissions with Covid and they note a 28% increase in numbers this week: COVID-19 | UKHSA data dashboard.

The vaccination programme remains the best way to protect our vulnerable patients as well as protect frontline services before the onset of winter pressures.