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03/10/2022

Deputy Colm Burke
Dáil Éireann,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re: PQ47131 To ask the Minister for Health his views on the increase in respiratory syncytial virus cases in 2022; when RSV season will officially be opened; the date that vaccines will be rolled out; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Burke

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The information provided in this response is based on the number of respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) cases notified to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) via the national Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system at HPSC and data on RSV provided by the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL), (see technical note below).

Data were extracted from CIDR on 03/10/2022 at 9am and were correct at the time of extraction. CIDR is a dynamic information system and data for 2021 and 2022 may change in future reports as further review and validation of data are carried out. NVRL data are provided on a weekly basis, and are also subject to further review and validation.

Table 1 shows the number of laboratory confirmed RSV cases notified to CIDR at HPSC by week of notification for weeks 36-39 2022.

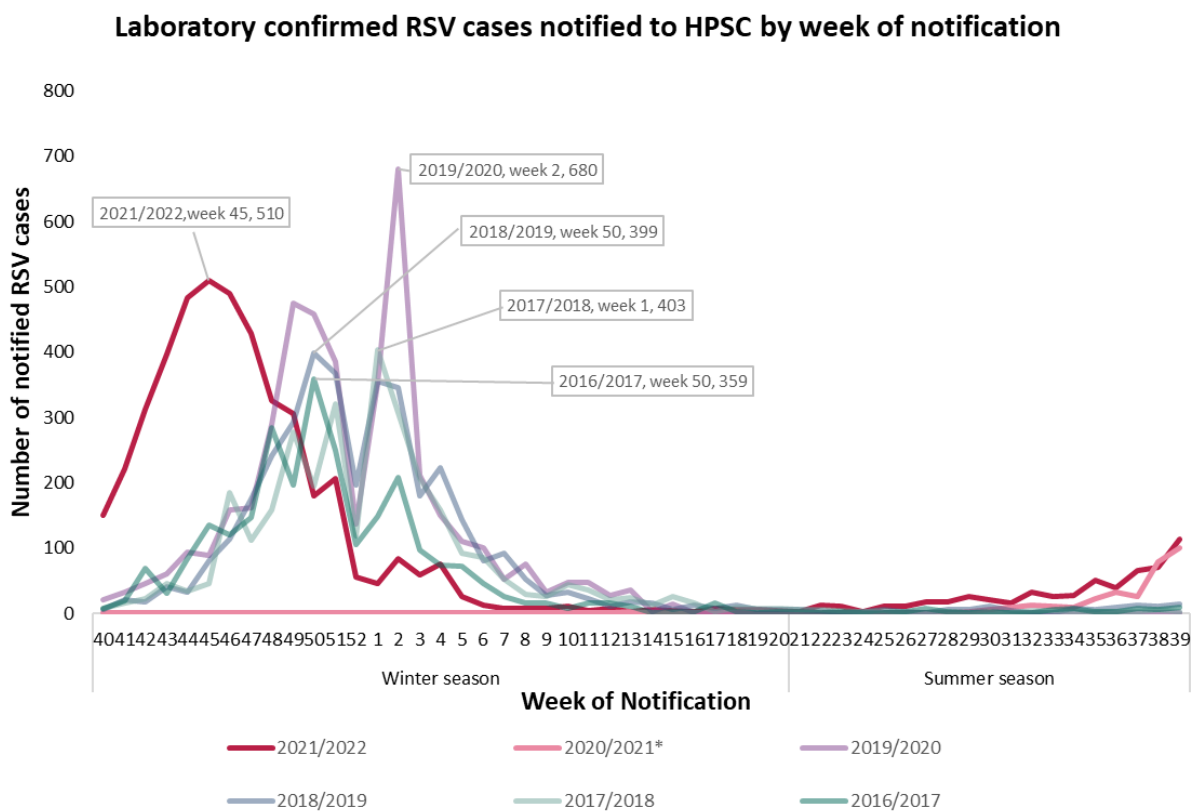
Figure 1 shows the number of laboratory confirmed RSV cases notified to CIDR by week of notification for RSV surveillance seasons 2016/2017 to 2021/2022. The peak number of RSV notifications in CIDR recorded for each season is also shown in figure 1. For seasons prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, RSV notifications peaked between week 50 (early -mid December) and week 2 (early January). RSV circulation was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 so very little RSV circulated during that season. During the 2021/2022 season, the peak number of RSV notifications on CIDR was in week 45 2021 (early November 2021) approximately five weeks earlier than in previous seasons.

Figure 2 shows the percentage RSV positivity of the non-sentinel samples tested by the NVRL for seasons 2016/2017 to 2021/2022. RSV typically remains active and above the 10% positivity threshold for 12 weeks each season and then declines. In 2021/2022 RSV positivity remained above the 10% positivity threshold for 13 consecutive weeks.

As the number of RSV notifications has increased steadily in recent weeks (See Table 1), it is likely that the 2022/2023 RSV season may start early, similar to the 2021/2022 season and commence in October and peak in November. If RSV activity follows pre-pandemic patterns, activity will commence in late November and peak in December/early January. In summary, RSV may peak anytime from early November to early January for the 2022/2023 season and currently it is too early to predict the exact timing but from current RSV activity it is likely to be an early RSV season similar to last season.

Table 1: Number of laboratory confirmed RSV cases notified to CIDR, by week of notification, weeks 36 to 39, 2022

	Week 39, 2022	Week 38, 2022	Week 37, 2022	Week 36, 2022
RSV notifications	114	71	65	39



*During the 2020/2021 season, there were only 9 laboratory confirmed RSV cases notified to HPSC on CIDR

Figure 1: Laboratory confirmed RSV cases notified to HPSC on CIDR by week of notification including peak week of RSV activity influenza/RSV seasons, 2016 – 2022

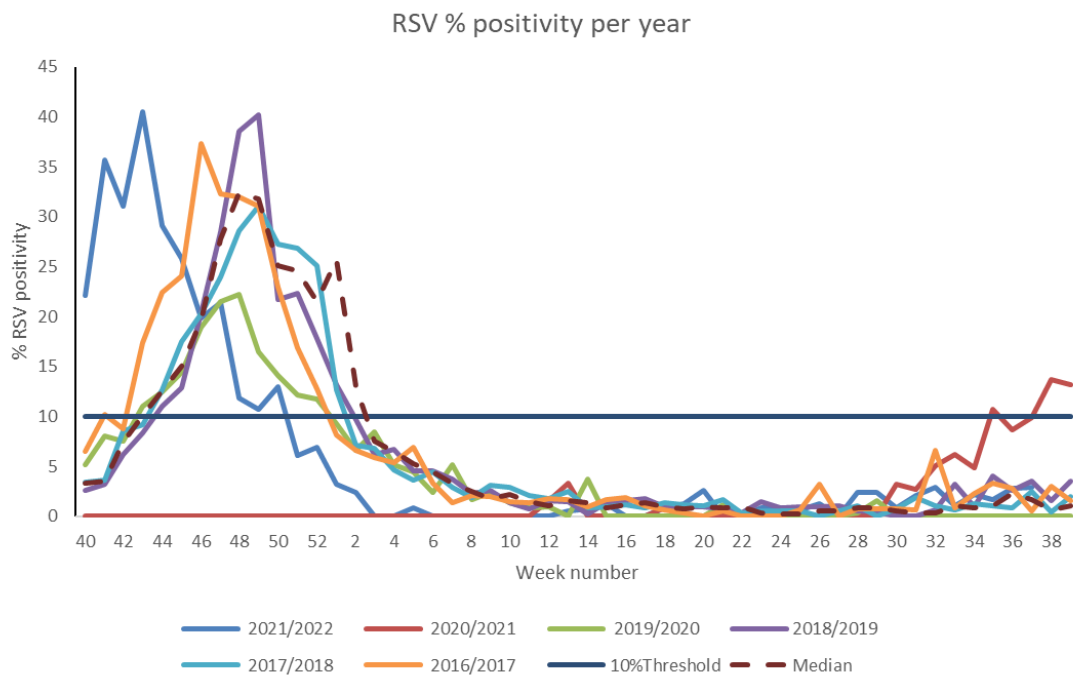


Figure 2 shows the percentage RSV positivity of the non-sentinel samples tested by the NVRL for seasons 2016/2017 to 2021/2022 and the median percentage positivity* (seasons 2014/2015 to 2019/2020).

*The median percentage positivity is derived from the median values from each week of seasons 2014/2015 to 2019/2020 (pre-pandemic).

Globally there are currently no approved RSV vaccines for use so no RSV vaccine programme exists in any country at this time.

However, many promising vaccine candidates are in clinical trials.

See <https://www.who.int/teams/health-product-policy-and-standards/standards-and-specifications/vaccine-standardization/respiratory-syncytial-virus-disease>

Technical note:

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is a notifiable disease in Ireland. HPSC undertakes the surveillance of RSV. Surveillance of RSV is undertaken through a number of different surveillance systems. All laboratory confirmed RSV cases and outbreaks are notified by clinicians and laboratories on Ireland’s Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting system (CIDR).

In addition, the National Virus Reference Laboratory (NVRL) tests all influenza-like illness (ILI) specimens referred by GPs in the sentinel surveillance network for RSV. The NVRL also tests non-sentinel respiratory specimens (mainly referred from hospital inpatients) for RSV. All RSV laboratory data from NVRL are reported to the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) and analysed on a weekly basis by HPSC.

If you require any further information or clarification please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,



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