

More flu this winter, but Type A cases rare — so far

By Mary Klemic
staff writer

The winter season is only a few days old, but the cold and flu bugs have already made their unwelcome appearances felt in Wayne and Oakland counties.

"This is the time of year we would expect to see it. This year we expect to see many more cases," said Dr. Donald Lawrence, assistant medical director of the Wayne County Health Department.

One case of Influenza Type A — the more serious type of flu strain that brings fevers of more than 101 degrees — has been confirmed in Wayne County, and one other is suspected in Oakland County, according to Dr. Lawrence.

Altogether, 12 cases of Type A flu have been reported throughout Michigan, and no cases of the more common Type B flu, he said.

Fraternity lauds Kaufman

Michigan Court of Appeals Judge Nathan J. Kaufman will be honored by fellow members of the Detroit Graduate Chapter of the Tau Epsilon Rho Law Fraternity upon his retirement from the bench at a dinner Jan. 29 at Kingsley Inn in Bloomfield Hills.

The public is invited. For reservations, call Beverly Betz at 592-4884.

Kaufman has served as an assistant Wayne County prosecutor and as judge of Detroit's Common Pleas Court, Wayne County Juvenile Court and Wayne County Circuit Court.

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"INFLUENZA is so highly communicable it is easy to spread, especially with holiday traveling," Lawrence said.

"Flu hits between December and March, and from all indications it's in Michigan now," said Keith Tait, epidemiologist at the Oakland County Health Division. "I don't know how much the temperature has to do with it, but it does have a pattern of coming between December and March."

Tait said an increase in upper respiratory infections in Oakland County was reported last week by physicians scattered around the county and by area hospitals. "It's not a question of whether you can really categorize any particular person having the flu," he commented. "There's a lot of colds and flu going around."

IN TROY, Beaumont Hospital reported 59 cases of viral infections and 79 instances of the lower intestinal flu bug in November and December. Another 78 persons in that time came to the hospital with cramps or abdominal pains that may or may not have been flu, a hospital representative said.

St. Mary Hospital in Livonia has not recorded an unusual number of flu cases, according to Sister Mary Harold, administrative assistant.

"It's the regular routine flu that doesn't involve many patients, the normal type of flu," Sister Harold said. "We didn't expect an unusual number."

Lawrence said flu usually comes with the colder weather. One theory for this is that people are indoors more often and have closer contact with others, he said.

TYPE A Influenza has a sudden onset. Its symptoms are a temperature of more than

101 degrees, coughing, sore throat and body aches and pains.

Type B influenza is the more common type of flu strain. It brings with it chills, headache, runny nose, sore throat, coughing and body aches. Recovery from this milder type of flu usually takes one to two weeks.

In the meantime, representatives urged the public to take precautions against being bitten by the cold or flu bugs, especially persons 65 and older and those with chronic conditions or immunity deficiency disorders.

Lawrence said persons should be vaccinated early in the season, in September or October, because the vaccine requires two weeks to take effect.

More severe cases should consult their physicians, he said. He also warned that persons who suspect they have Type A influenza to take Tylenol instead of aspirin. There has been a strong statistical correlation between persons who took aspirin with the stronger influenza and Reye's syndrome, Lawrence said.

Washington, Virginia, Texas, Tennessee, Pennsylvania, Oregon, New York and Alaska had outbreaks of Influenza Type A before Michigan, county officials said.

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