ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Session #5

Public Health Update

Respiratory Illnesses: Responding to Increased Cases in Alberta

October 26, 2023

10:30-12:00

Indigenous Services Canada · Services aux Autochtones Canada

Canada

Outline

1. MOH Update: Current Status & Key Messaging
- *Dr. Chris Sarin*

2. MOH Update: COVID-19 & Influenza Trends
- *Dr. Lauren Bilinsky*

3. Provincial Update: COVID-19 & Influenza Trends
- *Dr. Mark Joffe*

4. MOH Update: Vaccinations
- *Dr. Parminder Thiara*

5. MOH Update: Masking & Testing
- *Dr. Chris Sarin*

6. Update from Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health
- *Dr. Mark Joffe*

7. Questions

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Questions: VChelp@FNTN.ca

MOH Update: Current Status & Key Messaging

Dr. Chris Sarin

Senior Medical Officer of Health, FNIHB

Current Status:

- As of June 14, 2022, all remaining mandatory public health restrictions were lifted in Alberta.

- As of May 2023, The World Health Organization (WHO) stated COVID-19 no longer qualifies as a global emergency.

- WHO said that even though the emergency phase was over, the pandemic hasn't come to an end. It is still classified as global pandemic status.

- COVID-19 will likely circulate in tandem with other respiratory viruses this Fall and Winter.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Key Messages:

- Take a balanced approach focusing on effective public health measures

- Vaccination is an important and effective protective measure against respiratory illnesses

- Personal protective measures including hand washing, staying home when you are ill, appropriate mask wearing are also important

- Employing the above protective measures is key to protect the vulnerable (ie. elders, those who are immunocompromised)

- Communities can reach out to MOHs for assistance

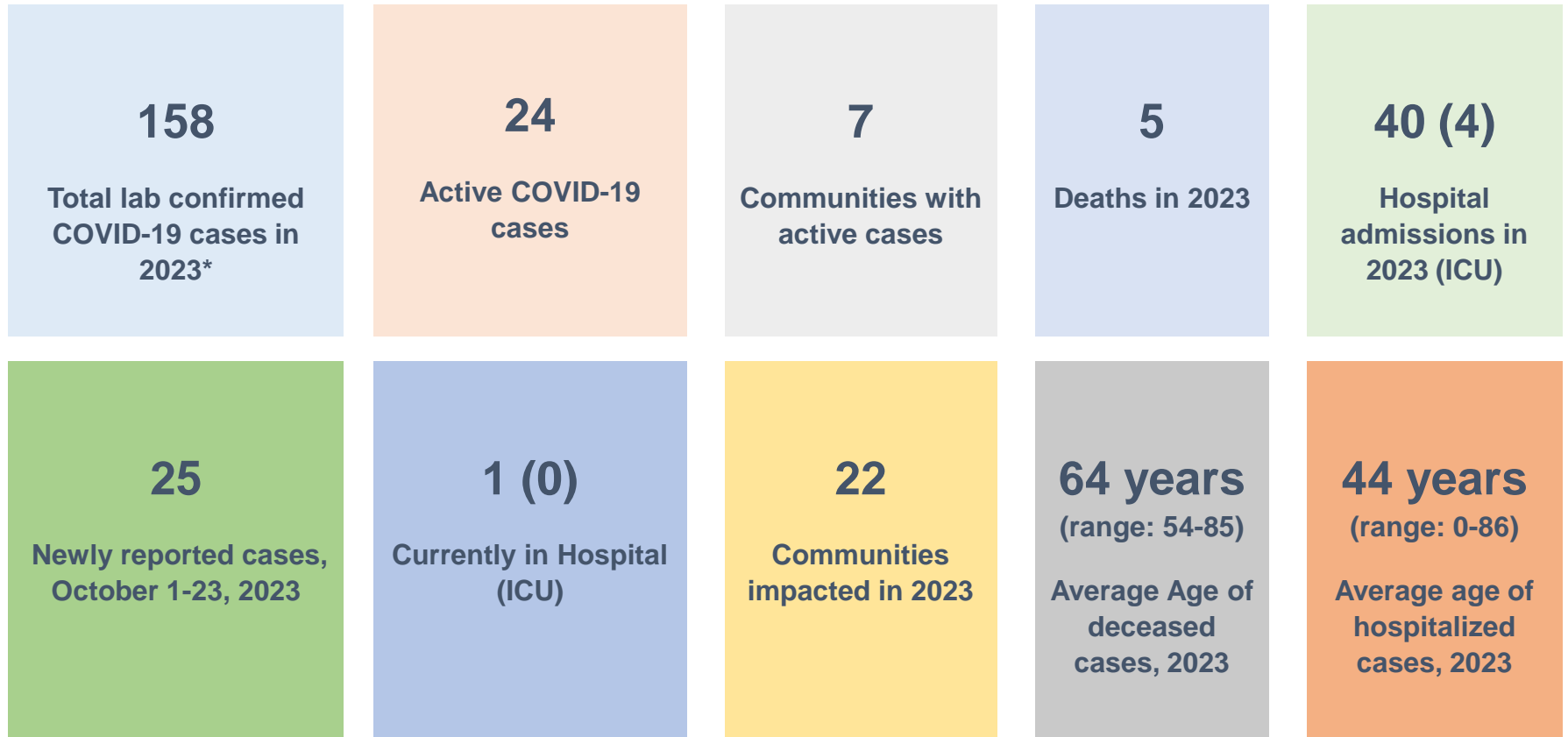# MOH Update: COVID-19 & Influenza Trends

Dr. Lauren Bilinsky

Deputy Medical Officer of Health, FNIHB

Overview of Lab Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities in Alberta, 2023
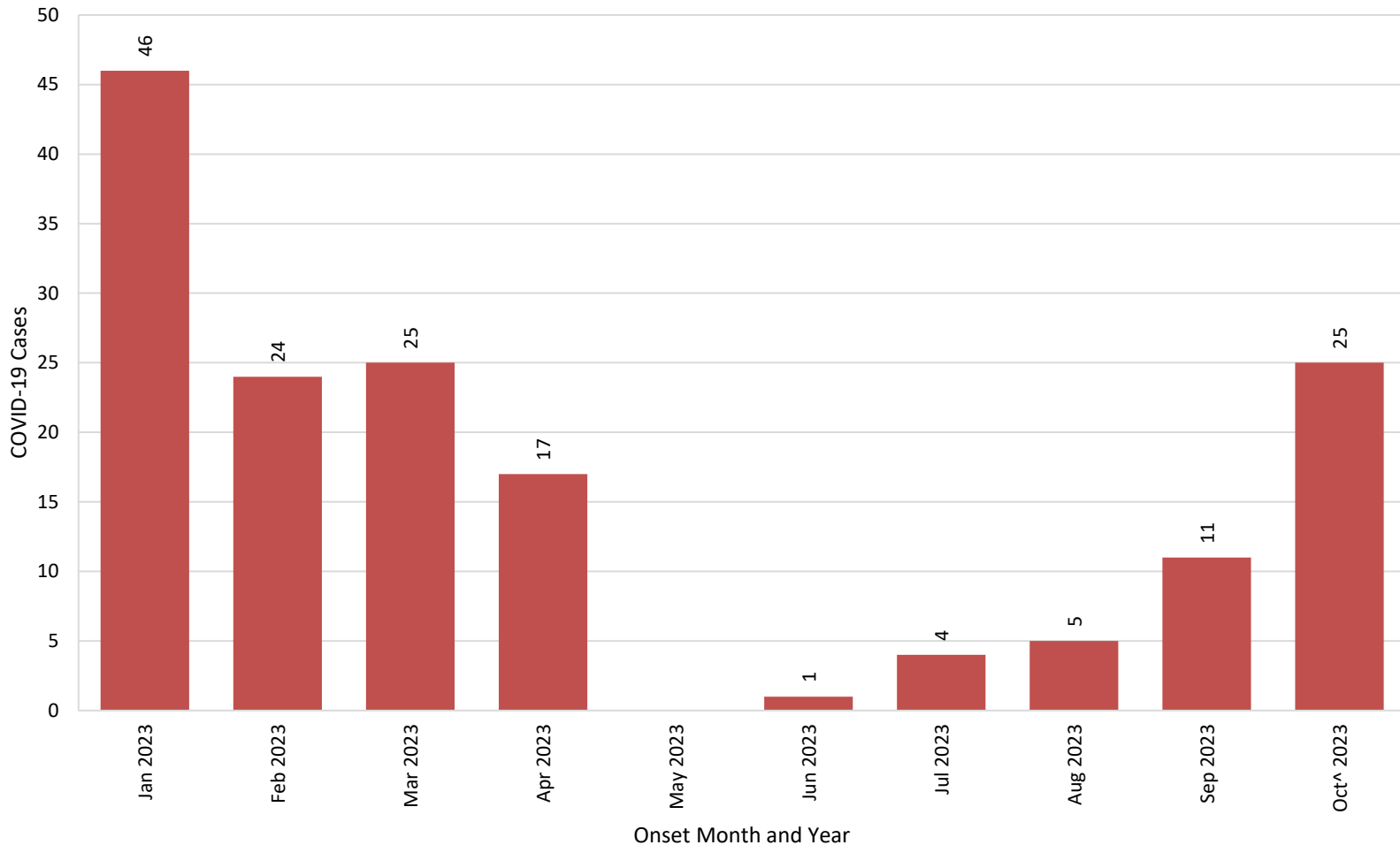
Source: FNIHB COVID-19 ER System via Synergy in Action (October 24, 2023)

158	24	7	5	40 (4)
Total lab confirmed COVID-19 cases in 2023*	Active COVID-19 cases	Communities with active cases	Deaths in 2023	Hospital admissions in 2023 (ICU)

25	1 (0)	22	64 years (range: 54-85)	44 years (range: 0-86)
Newly reported cases, October 1-23, 2023	Currently in Hospital (ICU)	Communities impacted in 2023	Average Age of deceased cases, 2023	Average age of hospitalized cases, 2023

*These do not include cases confirmed with only rapid antigen test in communities

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Lab Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in First Nations Communities by Month of Onset, 2023

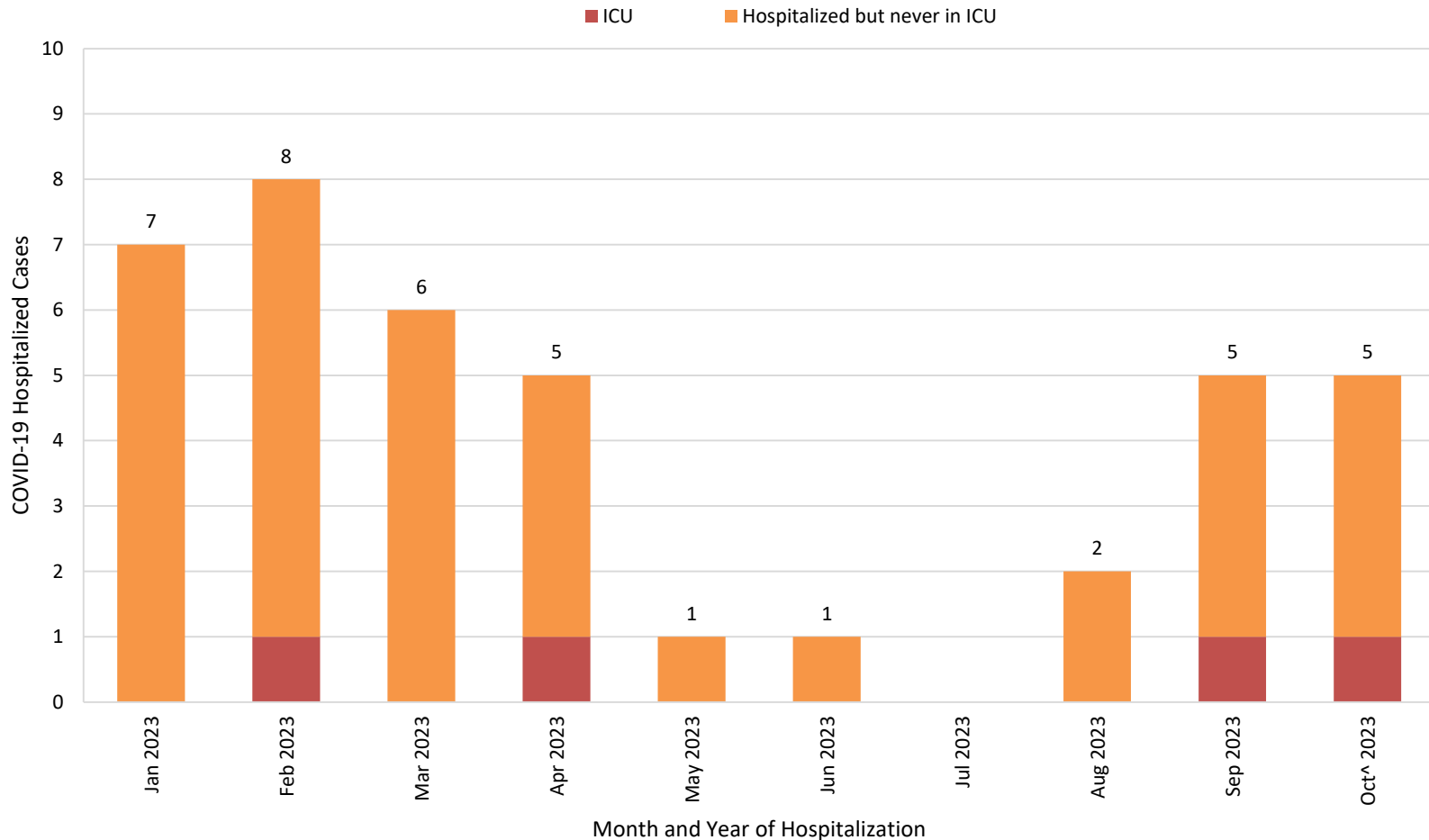**Source: FNIHB COVID-19 ER System via Synergy in Action (October 24, 2023)**

^Data may be incomplete

These do not include cases confirmed with only rapid antigen test in communities

8

COVID-19 Hospitalizations in First Nations Communities by Month of Hospitalization, 2023

Source: FNIHB COVID-19 ER System via Synergy in Action (October 24, 2023)

■ ICU   ■ Hospitalized but never in ICU

COVID-19 Hospitalized Cases

Month	Value
Jan 2023	7
Feb 2023	8
Mar 2023	6
Apr 2023	5
May 2023	1
Jun 2023	1
Jul 2023	
Aug 2023	2
Sep 2023	5
Oct^ 2023	5

Month and Year of Hospitalization

^Data may be incomplete

9

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Summary: COVID-19 & Influenza in Alberta First Nations Communities during the 2023/24 Respiratory Season*

- As of October 23, 2023: there have been 10 hospital admissions and one death due to COVID-19 reported among First Nations people living on-reserve in Alberta.

- As of October 23, 2023: no hospitalizations or deaths due to influenza have been reported among First Nations people living on-reserve in Alberta.

*The current respiratory season, 2023/24, started on August 27, 2023 and ends on August 24, 2024

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Provincial COVID-19 & Influenza Data

Dr. Mark Joffe

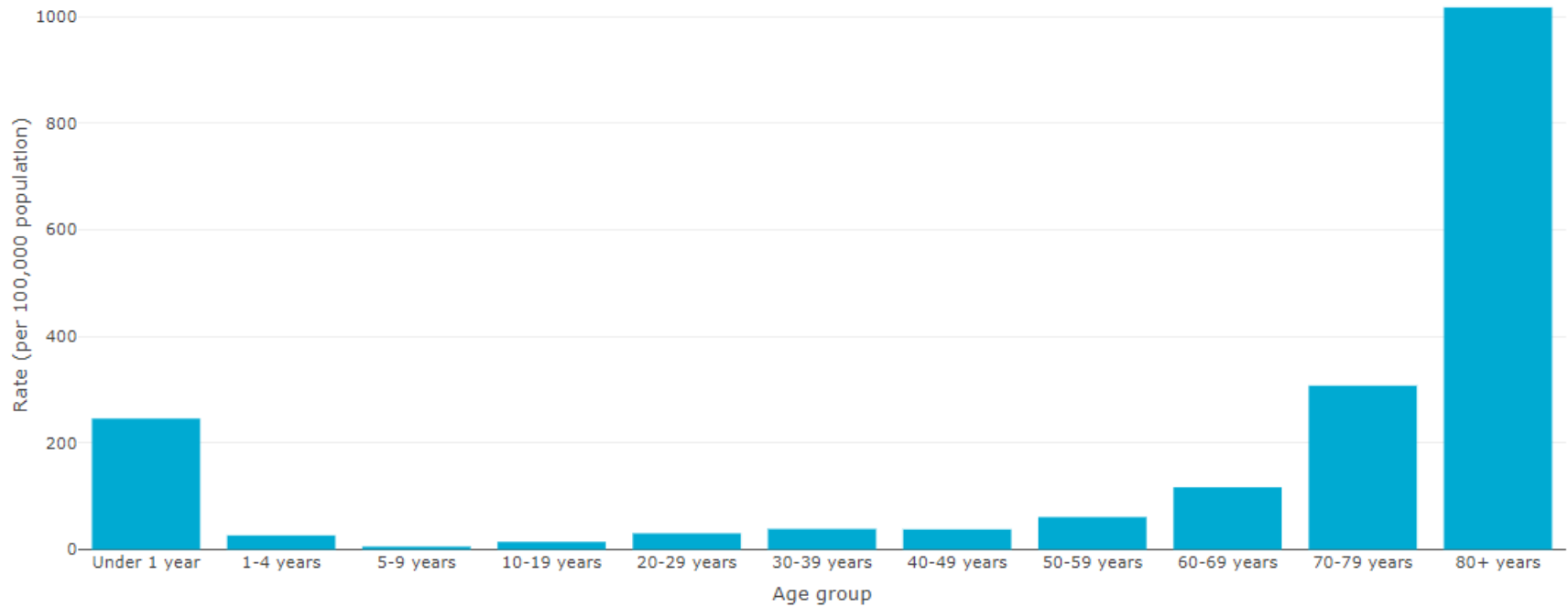*Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health*

COVID-19 Trends by Age

Source: Alberta Health, Alberta Influenza Statistics (October 14, 2023)

COVID-19 Cases and Rates by Age Group

Laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 by age group, 2023-2024

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Weekly COVID-19 Trends

Source: Alberta Health, Alberta Influenza Statistics (October 14, 2023)

948
(4301 this season)

SARS-CoV-2 cases

17.8%

SARS-CoV-2 positivity

361

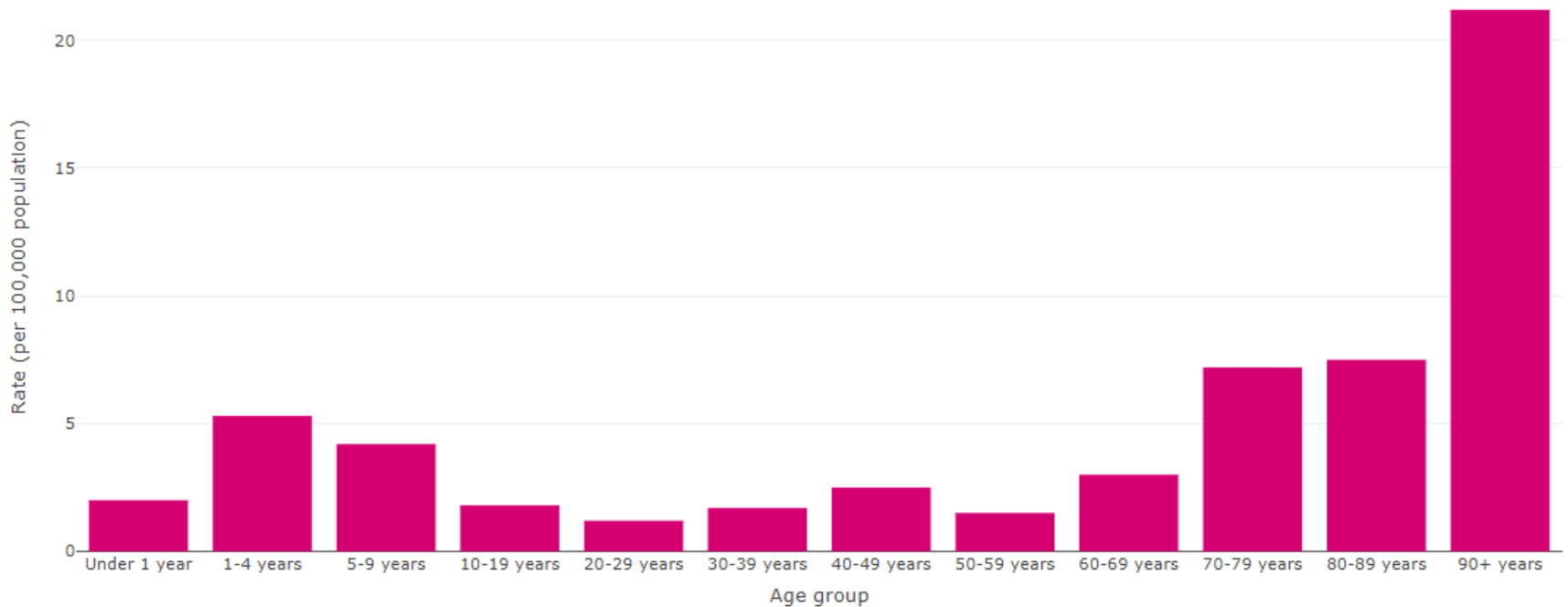SARS-CoV-2 in hospital**

13

SARS-CoV-2 in ICU**

7
(78 this season)

SARS-CoV-2 deaths

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Influenza Trends by Age

Source: Alberta Health, Alberta Influenza Statistics (October 14, 2023)

Population rates are per 100,000 population

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Weekly Influenza Trends

Source: Alberta Health, Alberta Influenza Statistics (October 14, 2023)

33
(162 this season)

Influenza cases

1.2%

Influenza positivity

1

Influenza hospital admissions

0

Influenza ICU admissions
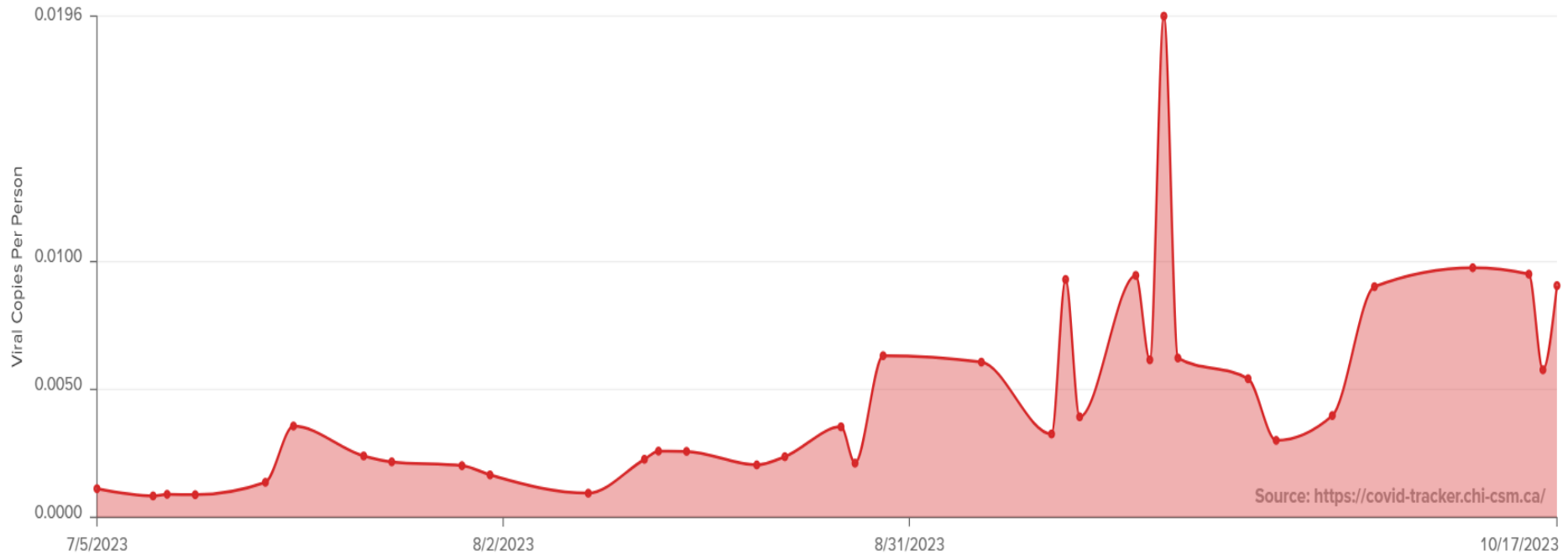
0
(1 this season)

Influenza deaths

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

COVID-19 Wastewater Tracking

Source: https://covid-tracker.chi-csm.ca/ from July 2, 2023 – October 3, 2023

Edmonton Wastewater Sampling

COVID-19 Wastewater Tracking

Source: https://covid-tracker.chi-csm.ca/ from July 2, 2023 – October 17, 2023

Calgary Wastewater Sampling

MOH Update: Vaccinations

Dr. Parminder Thiara

Deputy Medical Officer of Health, FNIHB

Vaccinations

- All approved vaccines are safe, effective and continue to play a role in preventing COVID-19 infection and limiting its spread. More importantly, these vaccines help prevent serious illness from COVID-19 infection.

- Albertans 6 months and older can get vaccinated. COVID-19 XBB.1.5 boosters for Albertans 6 months and older are available.

- The Moderna SpikeVax XBB.1.5 and the Pfizer-BioNTech XBB.1.5 mRNA vaccines were available to the general public starting October 16.

  – They are made to give more protection against the COVID-19 variants that are currently spreading.

- Public health staff and the public alike are encouraged to stay up to date with all routine immunizations, including COVID-19 and influenza.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

COVID-19 Vaccine Doses Administered in First Nations Communities by Week, 2023/24 Respiratory Season

Source: Community Health and Immunization Program (CHIP) Slice Allstats (October 24, 2023)
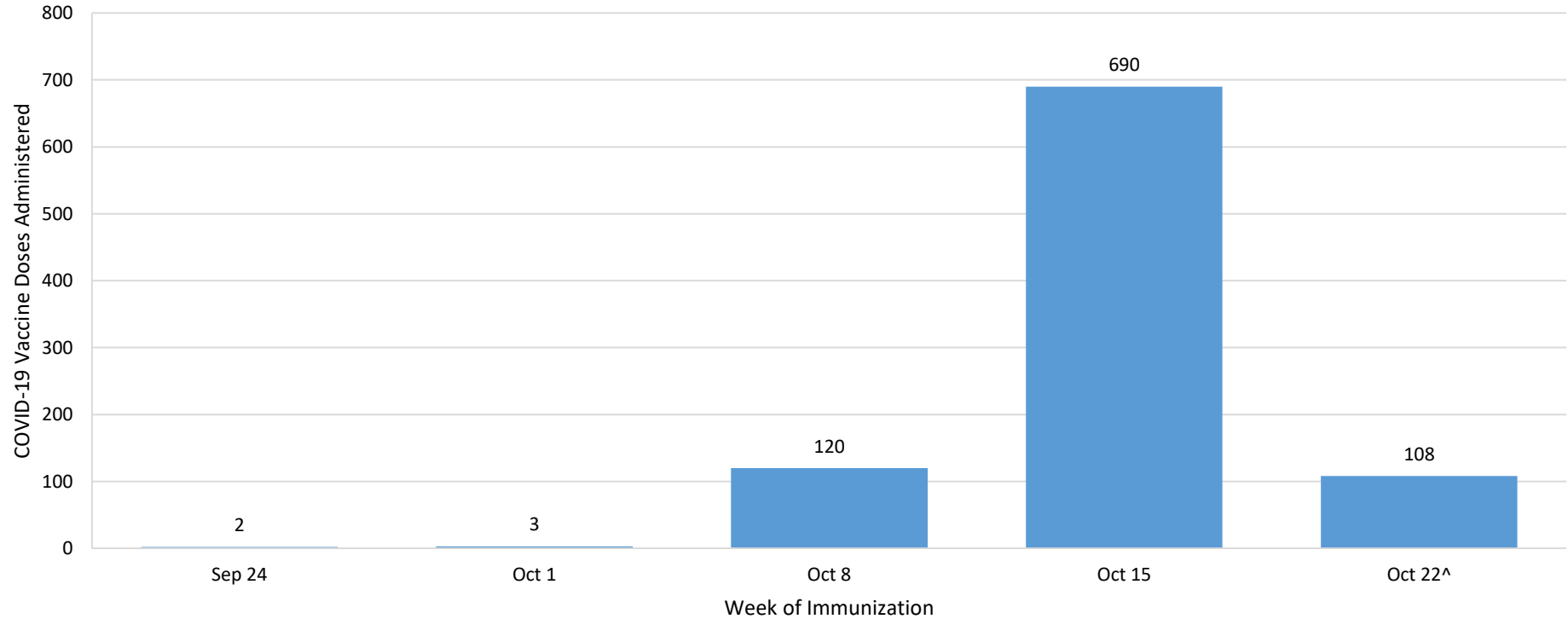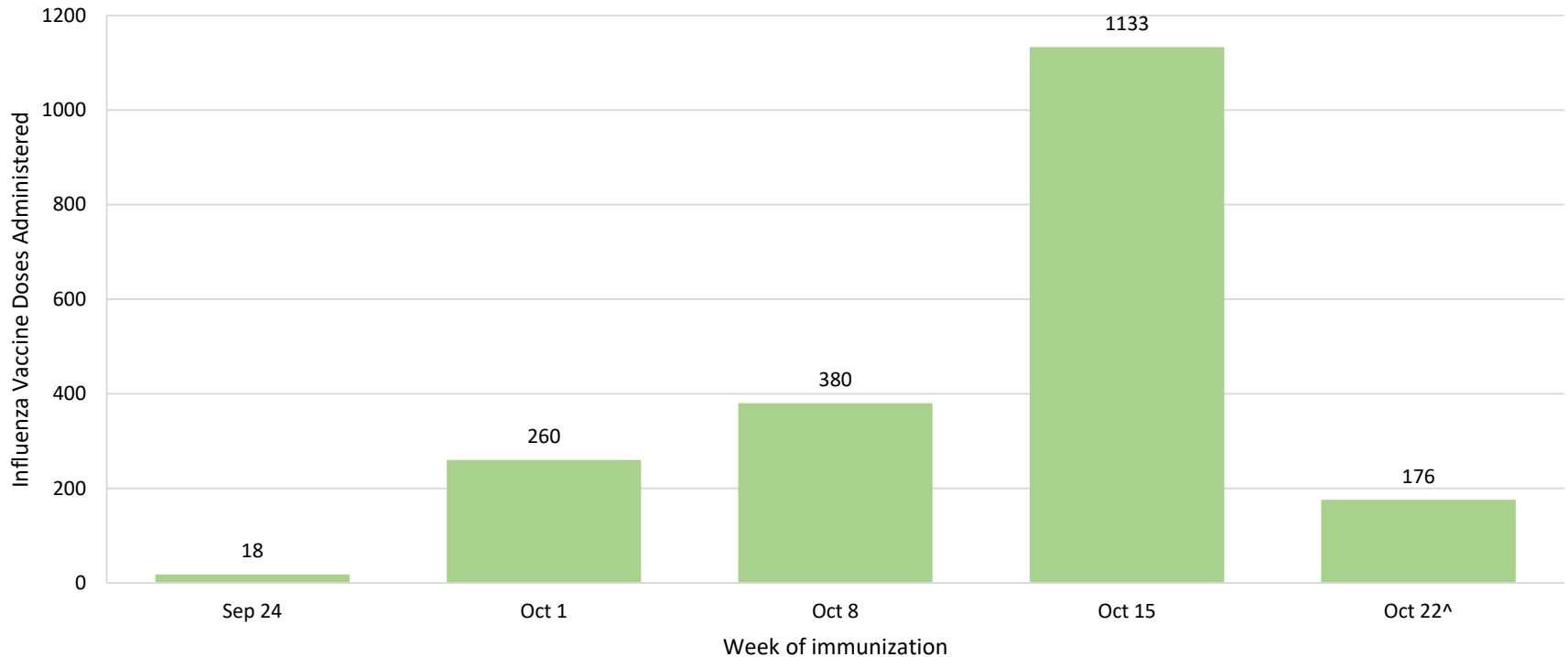

^Data may be incomplete

- As of October 24, 2023, 920 doses of the COVID-19 XBB.1.5 vaccine have been administered in First Nations communities in Alberta.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Influenza Vaccine Doses Administered in First Nations Communities by Week, 2023/24 Respiratory Season

Source: Community Health and Immunization Program (CHIP) Slice (October 24, 2023)

^Data may be incomplete

- As of October 24, 2023, a total of 1,967 influenza vaccines have been administered on-reserve in Alberta.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

COVID-19 and Influenza Vaccinations

- The COVID-19 and Influenza vaccines are available at all Alberta First Nation health centres and can safely be administered together to children 6 months and older during the same clinic visit.

- For parents/guardians wishing to book an appointment at an off-reserve site, appointments for children under five years of age and their families are available at Alberta Health Services clinics and can be booked by calling 811 or online at: https://bookvaccine.alberta.ca/s/booking.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

MOH Update: Masking & Testing

Dr. Chris Sarin

Senior Medical Officer of Health, FNIHB

Masking

- Masking continues to be an important part of preventing the transmission of respiratory illnesses.

- AHS **encourages** masking by AHS people, patients, designated family/support persons, and visitors in all AHS settings.

- Masking is **required** in all AHS settings for AHS people, patients, designated family/support persons, and visitors in the following circumstances:

  a) if required by a Medical Officer of Health during an outbreak according to the Communicable Disease Control Outbreak Guidelines;

  b) for AHS people, as identified by the AHS Attending Work with COVID-19 Symptoms or a Positive COVID-19 Test Directive;

  c) when a masking poster is posted on patient doors; or

  d) when in contact with a severely immunocompromised patient.

- AHS' decision for this requirement for continuous masking was made based on a number of factors, including: inclining COVID-19 case numbers, testing positivity rate, wastewater data, and hospital admission rates for respiratory illnesses in Alberta, as well as consultation with stakeholders including clients, families, advisory councils, clinicians, and frontline managers.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Masking, continued

- FNIHB MOHs feel it is appropriate for First Nations Health Centres to examine their masking and IPC protocols to decrease the risk of the Health Centre being a place where respiratory illnesses are spread.

- The FNIHB MOHs believe that there should be a lower threshold for mask use in health centres and believe now is the time to consider if a masking protocol should be implemented in community health centres.

  – To reiterate, AHS encourages masking by AHS people, patients, designated family/support persons, and visitors in all AHS settings.

- Staff in health centres have an important role in protecting clients by preventing the spread of disease and may choose to mask more often.

- Outside of health care settings, there are currently no masking requirements in Alberta. In the community, the FNIHB MOHs recommend that people at high risk of respiratory illnesses consider masking when in public or crowded spaces.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Testing

- Testing can be helpful to direct treatment for COVID-19, influenza, or other diseases in higher-risk patients that are symptomatic.

- FNIHB MOHs support Point of Care Testing (POCT) or lab testing to help direct treatment during this respiratory illness season.

- This can help differentiate influenza, covid and other viruses to help direct treatment.

- A positive Rapid Antigen Test can also be used to guide COVID-19 treatment.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Testing, continued

- Two types of instruments (molecular/nucleic acid-based/PCR) remain available in First Nations Health Centres in Alberta for COVID-19 testing

Abbott ID Now (POC)

GeneXpert System

- 55 total machines available in Alberta First Nations
    - 28 GeneXpert in communities (1 regional machine to support training)
    - 27 Abbott ID Now in communities and (1 regional machine to support training)

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Preventing the Spread of Respiratory Viruses

Immunization
- Vaccines are safe, effect and offer the best defense from serious illness.
- Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines can be safely administered to individuals ages 6 months and older, at the same time.
- Most individuals do not have any side effects from vaccines and severe side effects are rare.

Basic Infection, Prevention and Control Practices
- Stay home when sick;
- Practice proper respiratory etiquette (e.g. covering coughs and sneezes);
- Wash hands and sanitize; and,
- Mask up in crowded indoor spaces.

Maintain High-Quality Cleaning Practices in Public Spaces
- Regularly sanitize all high-traffic areas;
- Ensure public surfaces are wiped down between users; and,
- Limit the sharing of items and equipment.

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Resources

FNIHB Communicable Disease Inbox:
- cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab@sac-isc.gc.ca

Alberta Health Respiratory Virus Dashboard:
- Respiratory virus dashboard | alberta.ca

OneHealth Toolkit:
- https://www.onehealth.ca/ab/ABCovid-19
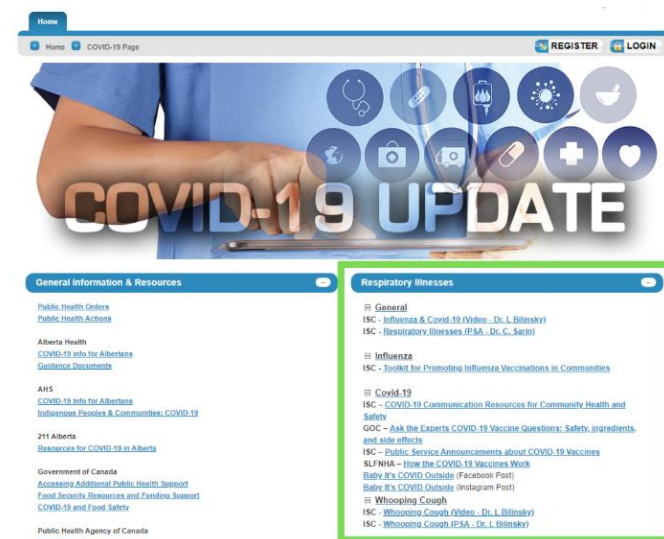
Questions with the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health

Dr. Mark Joffe

Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health

Questions?

- ***VCHELP@FNTN.CA***
- **cdemergenciesab-urgencesmtab@sac-isc.gc.ca**

Acknowledgements

Dr. Parminder Thiara, Deputy Medical Officer of Health – FNIHB

Dr. Chris Sarin, Senior Medical Officer of Health – FNIHB

Dr. Lauren Bilinsky (she/her), Deputy Medical Officer of Health – FNIHB

Dr. Mark Joffe, Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health

TSAG Telehealth Team (Alannah Hanson and team)

FNIHB Technical Team

ISC INDIGENOUS SERVICES CANADA

Questions: VChelp@FNTN.ca