



PRESS STATEMENT

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INFLUENZA: PNG DATA COLLECTION SHINES LIGHT

Influenza viruses remain a major cause of disease worldwide, with four major influenza pandemics claiming more than 100 million lives over the past 100 years.

The PNG Institute of Medical Research (IMR) has been serving as the National Influenza Centre for the country since 2008.

“As PNG’s National Influenza Centre, we contribute to the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System established by the World Health Organization,” said Jacinta Kono, a researcher with IMR in Goroka.

“As part of our role, we collect nasal swabs from patients with influenza-like illness (ILI) attending participating clinics,” Ms Kono said.

“About 20% of these samples test positive for influenza virus, so we were keen to investigate the role of other viruses in influenza-like illnesses in PNG,” she said.

“In 2010, we collected nearly 300 nasal swabs from patients at Vanimo and Goroka General Hospitals, testing them for a broad range of viral respiratory germs (including respiratory syncytial virus, parainfluenza viruses, coronaviruses, rhinovirus, metapneumovirus and adenovirus).

“All these viruses have been implicated as causes of influenza-like illness and pneumonia in studies around the world.

“Our study showed that there were many viral respiratory pathogens associated with the presentation of influenza-like illnesses in PNG.

“We detected all the viruses targeted in this study in our samples, with some more prevalent than others, which has implications for co-infection in more serious cases.

“This is the first time the role of other respiratory viruses in the presentation of influenza-like illnesses has been investigated here. The high frequency of a large range of respiratory pathogens may contribute to the high burden of pneumonia in PNG,” Ms Kono said.

Symposium Paper: Viral agents associated with influenza-like illnesses in PNG in 2010.

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