



TITLE: Seasonal influenza disease and annual influenza vaccine coverage at Primary Health Care Corporation, Qatar, 2018–2019: a descriptive study

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ABSTRACT

Background: Influenza is the most common communicable disease in the State of Qatar. The objective of this study was to describe the occurrence of seasonal influenza and influenza vaccine uptake, as well as to analyze whether influenza vaccine efficacy during the 2018/2019 season was met. Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) plays an important role in influenza disease surveillance and annual influenza vaccine administration in the country. Therefore, specific data available from this organization would reflect on the surveillance standards in place. However, data on influenza disease burden and vaccination coverage for the season was limited.

Methods: A cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted on the retrospective data of influenza-like illness (ILI) cases confirmed during the 2018/2019 influenza season by PHCC and the number of people who received the annual influenza vaccine in PHCC during the same season.

Results: ILI and influenza data: A total of 998 ILI cases were considered for this study. Laboratory testing was carried out among 88.5% of the cases. Type A and B infection contributed to 63.4% and 36.4% of the influenza cases, respectively. Furthermore, 87% ($n=415$) of the total influenza cases were not vaccinated with the season's influenza vaccine, and 69% ($n=18$) of the total vaccinated ILI cases ($n=26$) tested negative for influenza. **Influenza vaccine campaign data:** Overall, 42,476 individuals were vaccinated with the annual influenza vaccine in PHCC for the 2018/2019 season. Influenza vaccine was administered to 52.3% of people with any one risk factor (mostly chronic diseases) for severe disease due to influenza.

Conclusions: The findings of this study on influenza seasonality and etiology were similar to that on previous seasons in the region. Recommendations focused on accurate and elaborate data collection and future research on the factors facilitating influenza vaccine uptake and vaccine effectiveness.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Seema Sylvia Dsouza is a Clinical Practitioner with a MBBS degree from India, a Diploma in Pediatrics from Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and a Master in Public Health from University of Roehampton, London. She is an independent medical practitioner and the Medical Director of David Geriatric Solutions, which is her own registered charitable organization, catering to geriatric population in rural India. This research is her independent work and is her first publication. The paper was submitted for the completion of her Masters.

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