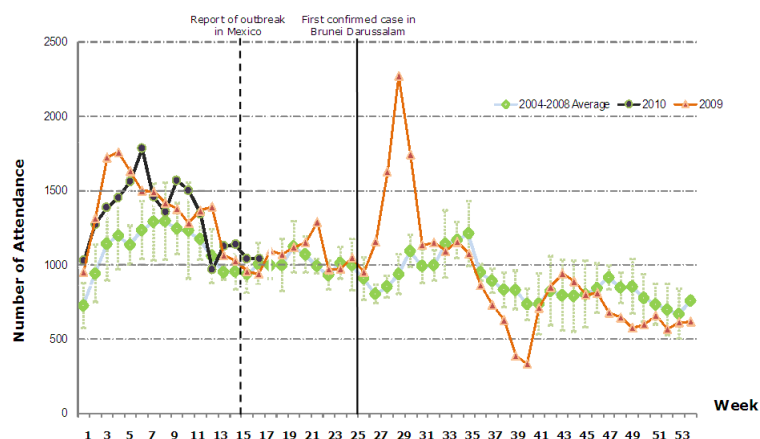


Healthcare in Brunei Darussalam: Influenza Pandemics



Influenza like illness surveillance showing cases of H1N1 in 2009 compared to the case recorded in the previous year.

In the last 120 years, there had been five recorded pandemic influenza; the Russian Flu (1889-1890), Spanish Flu (1918-19), Asian Flu (1958-59), Hong Kong Flu (1968-69) and the 2009 H1N1 pandemic (2009-2010). Although a small country, Brunei Darussalam was also affected in some ways.

The Russian Flu affected Asia in 1890 resulting in approximately a million deaths. No details are available as how Brunei was affected as the healthcare system was only established in 1907. The Spanish Flu (H1N1) was the most severe with as estimated 40 million deaths worldwide. The high fatalities was attributed to standards of living, effects of the first World War and healthcare systems that were not able to cope. Most of the deaths occurred in the young adults (20 to 40 years old). Fortunately, Brunei had practically escaped this epidemic unscathed with most cases being mild. The rubber and plantations estates were most affected with a numbers workers temporarily incapacitated. The cholera and small pox epidemics that had occurred before the establishment of healthcare had result in more deaths than the Spanish Flu. The next influenza pandemic (Asian

Flu, H2N2) started in China in 1956 and reached Southeast Asia in February 1957. There were an estimated two millions deaths worldwide. Again, Brunei was fortunate and was hardly affected. A slight increase in the number of influenza illness was recorded and the overall mortality was not more than expected. The Hong Kong Flu (H3N2) started on the 16 July 1968 and caused an estimated one million deaths. Similar to the Asian Flu, Brunei was fortunate and was hardly affected.

The last recorded pandemic (2009 H1N1) reached Brunei Darussalam approximately ten weeks after Mexico, the epicentre reported its first case. The first case in Brunei was an imported case. At the end of the pandemic, there were more than 2,000 cases with five deaths recorded. Prior to this 2009 pandemic, there had been two epidemic scare. These were the Severe Adult Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) caused by the corona virus and the Avian Flu (H5N1), both of which originated from Southern China, Guangdong and Hong Kong. In both outbreaks, Brunei Darussalam only recorded one imported case of SARS from Singapore but no documented case of Avian Flu.