

Increase in viral meningitis cases reported in France, summer 2005

Denise Antona¹ (d.antona@invs.sante.fr) and Jean-Jacques Chomel², with the Enterovirus Surveillance Laboratory Network

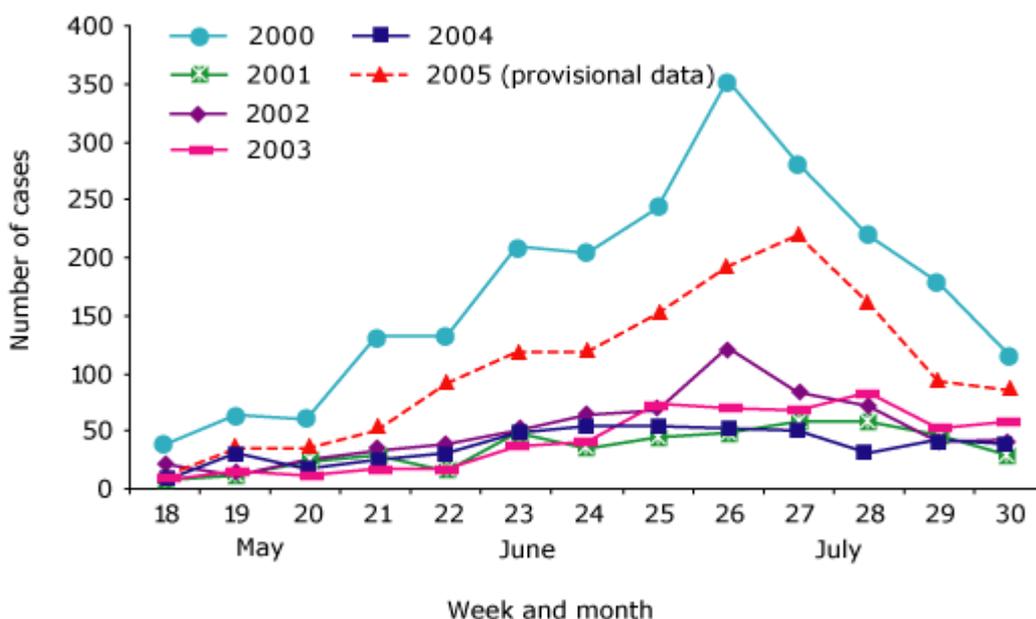
¹Institut de veille sanitaire, Saint-Maurice, France

²Centre national de référence des Entérovirus, Lyon, France

Since the end of May 2005, an increase in the number of viral meningitis cases has been observed, unevenly distributed throughout mainland France, with the following regions affected the most: Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (southeast France), Ile de France (Paris and surrounding area), Rhône-Alpes (southeast France), Midi-Pyrénées (southwest France), et Haute-Normandie (northwest France) [1].

Information has been collected from virology laboratories participating in the enterovirus surveillance network, and although biased, they do not indicate an epidemic on the scale of the 2000 outbreak (Figure 1). However, the increase in case numbers is greater than that seen in 2001-2004. Numbers peaked in week 27, and a decrease has been seen since then. Strains identified were mainly echovirus 30, coxsackievirus group B type 5, and to a lesser extent, echoviruses 13 and 6.

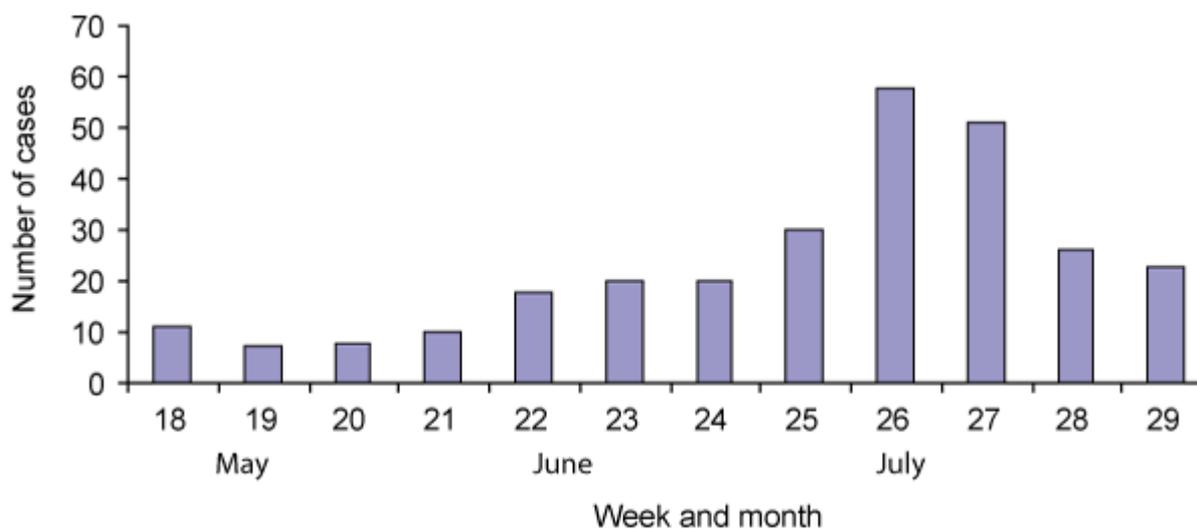
Figure 1. Positive LCR test results for enterovirus, comparison of 2005 with years 2000-2004, weeks 18-30, France



At the beginning of May (week 18), 11% of samples tested by ligase chain reaction (LCR) were positive for enterovirus, and this reached 60% in week 29 (18-24 July).

The activity registered by the virology laboratories reflects only a small part of the admissions to hospital emergency departments for viral meningitis, as not all patients are sampled for enterovirus testing. In Ile-de-France, admissions are monitored in 23 emergency departments. Figure 2 shows the weekly admissions from 1 May to 24 July 2005 (weekly 18 to 29) for viral meningitis: cases increased until week 26, then decreased.

Figure 2. Hospital admissions for viral meningitis, by week, in the 23 emergency service districts of Ile de France, 1 May - 24 July 2005



A paper on the past 5 years of enterovirus surveillance in France will be published in the *Bulletin Epidémiologique Hebdomadaire* (<http://www.invs.sante.fr/beh/default.htm>) in October 2005, and a detailed report of the year 2005 is planned for publication in 2006.

Increases in incidence of echoviruses 13 and 30 in Europe were last mentioned in *Eurosurveillance* in 2002 [2].

This article has been translated and adapted from reference 1.

References:

1. Institut de veille sanitaire. *Epidémie de méningites virales en France. Le point au 1er août 2005*. 1 August 2005. (http://www.invs.sante.fr/presse/2005/le_point_sur/meningites_010805/index.html)
2. Noah N, Reid F. Recent increases in incidence of echoviruses 13 and 30 around Europe. *Eurosurveillance Weekly* 2002; 6(7): 14/02/2002. (<http://www.eurosurveillance.org/ew/2002/020214.asp#4>)