



TARRANT ANNUAL MEETING 2018

Calgary, Alberta



SUMMARY

The 2018 TARRANT AGM was held at Aloft Calgary university hotel on 13th April. The evening featured experts in Influenza from Alberta Health, ProvLab and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Mariam Osman an Epidemiologist with Alberta Health spoke on the epidemiology of the 2017/8 Influenza season highlighting the different rates and levels of severity of the circulating viruses within the province. This season followed a similar trend to previous H3N2 dominant seasons. However compared to previous seasons, Influenza B cases peaked earlier in the season and represented a significant proportion of the cases. Despite an earlier peak, the severity of Influenza was lower this season.

Dr. Marie Varughese from Alberta health discussed the role of mathematical modelling and forecasting in relation to Influenza. Forecasting seasonal Influenza can be challenging due to frequent changes in viral architecture. Despite this, the model used for forecasting Influenza works well, and it can provide information for planning and preparedness.

Dr. Steven Drews, a clinical virologist at ProvLab, provided updates in respiratory virus testing in ProvLab. The new pathway for respiratory virus testing at ProvLab is streamlined and efficient in providing test results. Dr. Drew explained how respiratory virus information is shared within Alberta and out of province (including international) partners.

Kaitlyn Shaw the project coordinator at BCCDC paired up with the TARRANT team to talk about the history and future directions of the Influenza surveillance project. Part of the session included an open discussion with sentinels where questions were answered and ideas were brainstormed. Sentinels mentioned that they were very satisfied with how the TARRANT project is run.

Finally, Dr. Danuta Skowronski, the Epidemiology Lead of Influenza and Emerging Respiratory Pathogens at the BCCDC, discussed the Influenza vaccine effectiveness for 2017/8. The lecture discussed the details and challenges of vaccine production, administration and effectiveness including viral mutations and budgeting. The vaccine has a low effectiveness and remains unpredictable but research is underway in addressing these deficiencies.