



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
CUMMING SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

TARRANT ANNUAL MEETING 2019

Calgary, Alberta



SUMMARY

The 2019 TARRANT AGM was held at the Matrix hotel on 13th April. The evening featured experts in TARRANT team, ProvLab and the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Dr. James Dickinson opened the conference with an introduction to the 2018/2019 Influenza season highlighting the different rates and levels of severity of the circulating viruses within the province. This season did not follow a similar trend to previous H3N2 dominant seasons since H1N1 was the dominant strain. In addition, compared to previous seasons, Influenza H3N2 cases increased later in the season. Despite this increase, the severity of the flu was lower than previous years.

Dr. Nathan Zelyas from Provlab discussed a pilot study of routine molecular point-of-care testing for respiratory virus in hospitals. In the study, it was found that rapid influenza testing results can decrease antibiotic usage and improved appropriate treatment (antivirals). The use of these tests would also lower hospital costs as less X-rays would be needed and correct medication would be administered.

Dr. Siobhan Leir, an epidemiologist at BCCDC talked about the vaccine effectiveness during the 2018/2019 Influenza season in Canada. The lecture discussed the details and challenges of vaccine production, administration and effectiveness including viral mutations and budgeting. The vaccine had low effectiveness against H3N2 in 2018-2019. It is hypothesized that this may be due to the fact that H3 virus does not grow well in egg based vaccines. However, the use of cell based vaccines would not be approved by old standards. There was no antigenic drift or fitness advantage this year.

Finally, Dr. Danuta Skowronski, the Epidemiology Lead of Influenza and Emerging Respiratory Pathogens at the BCCDC, discussed the achievement in Influenza vaccine effectiveness monitoring. The presentation discussed how the program revolutionized vaccine effectiveness understanding, sex effects, birth cohort effects, pandemic readiness, and repeat vaccination effects. 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.