

6.1 Viral Encephalitis

Summary

Number of cases, 2006: 16
Number of cases, 2005: 6
Crude incidence rate, 2006: 0.4/100,000

In 2006, 16 cases of viral encephalitis were notified in Ireland, which is a crude incidence rate of 0.4 per 100,000 total population. The number of viral encephalitis notifications in 2006 increased when compared with the previous two years, with six cases notified in 2005 and five in 2004. The reasons for this increase are unclear.

In 2006, the distribution of viral encephalitis cases in males and females was identical; eight cases each, giving a male: female ratio of 1.0:1.0. Cases ranged in age from three months to 77 years (table 1). Over one third of the cases (n=6; 38%) occurred in children <10 years of age and 44% were in adults 50 years of age and greater (table 1). The highest incidence rates were in children aged 1-4 years (1.7/100,000), followed by infants <1 year (1.6/100,000) and then elderly adults 65 years of age and greater (0.9/100,000) (table 1). The causative agent was identified in all 16 cases of

viral encephalitis notified; herpes simplex virus was the organism associated with seven and varicella zoster virus with the remaining nine cases. Herpes simplex virus was the predominant causative agent of viral encephalitis in children, accounting for five out of the six cases notified in the <10 year olds. Varicella zoster cases on the other hand, occurred predominantly in adults (n=8 cases, age range 16-77 years) and just one case occurred in a young child, in the 1-4 year old age group.

The figures presented in this summary are based on data extracted from the Computerised Infectious Disease Reporting (CIDR) system on 27th July 2007.

Table 1. Number, crude incidence rates and proportion of viral encephalitis cases by age group in 2006

	Number	Proportion (%)	ASIR
<1	1	6	1.6
1-4	4	25	1.7
5-9	1	6	0.3
10-44	3	19	0.1
45-64	3	19	0.3
65+	4	25	0.9
All ages	16	100	0.4

ASIR, age specific incidence rates