

Characterization of the epidemic influenza B viruses isolated during 2004-2005 season in Taiwan

Abstract:

To characterize the antigenic and genetic relationships of influenza B viruses isolated during the 2004-05 season, a total of 348 isolates collected in different parts of Taiwan were further analyzed. Viruses belonging to both influenza B lineages, B/Yamagata/16/88 (B/Yam) and B/Victoria/2/87 (B/Vic) were detected, although an increasing number of B/Vic lineage isolates was obtained as the season progressed. Recent B/Vic-lineage isolates were found to have additional amino acid substitutions compared to isolates from previous seasons, indicating that viruses of this lineage continue to evolve significantly and may have the capacity to become the dominant influenza B viruses worldwide. Results presented in this report demonstrate that antigenically and genetically distinct viruses within both B/Vic and B/Yam lineages co-circulate and that reassortment among these two lineages occurs frequently contributing to the genetic diversity of the circulating strains.