

THE SHIVERS PROJECT

SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE INFLUENZA AND VACCINE EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH & SURVEILLANCE

SHIVERS II study update – August 2018

The SHIVERS-II study is about improving our understanding of the immunity or protection people have against the flu through infection or vaccination. It is led by ESR (the Institute of Environmental Science & Research). Findings from this study will be used by the New Zealand government to inform recommendations around the flu vaccination and to make better flu vaccines in the future.

We would like to thank our SHIVERS-II participants for your good will, dedication, and insights. We are so grateful to have 2,186 Wellingtonians take part in this study. Because of this group of people, we are equipped to achieve our study's aim of better understanding people's immunity against the flu.



ESR's SHIVERS-II project team.

L-R: Christina Bir, Robert Press, Sarah Henry, Claire Newbern, Sue Huang, Ben Waite and Lauren Jelley.

SHIVERS-II

Study Timeline

Pre-season blood collection: March–May
Online Questionnaire: March–May
Post-Vaccination blood collection: April–Sept
Influenza-like illness reporting: May–Sept
Post-season blood collection: Oct–Dec
Study results: November 2019 (tbc)

Weekly Surveys to Monitor for Influenza-like Illness

In May, we started sending our online surveys to participants about flu-like symptoms, such as cough and fever. A big thanks to our participants who have answered their online weekly surveys that let us know if they have had the flu vaccine and/or if they are experiencing these symptoms. 1,821 participants

have answered the survey every week! The weekly survey will continue until the end of the flu season in September. Participants with changes to their contact details, can update them via the survey or by emailing ShiversProject@esr.cri.nz.

If participants report having the flu shot, we will remind them of when they are due for their post-vaccination blood test (14-28 days after the flu shot).



Sample collection

Our designated SCLs (Southern Community Laboratories) have been busy with the 2,186 pre-season and the 1,379 post-vaccination blood tests. A **BIG shout out** to all the Wellington region SCL phlebotomists for their awesome work! The picture is of the Lower Hutt SCL team.



Study Nurses

SHIVERS-II is very fortunate to have our own nurses dedicated to the study. Study nurses contact participants who report flu-like symptoms to assess and, if needed, arrange a visit to take a nose or throat swab and a blood sample. If the swab returns a positive flu result, the nurse arranges a further blood sample from the participant. ESR sends the swab results to the participant's GP. In the photo above are Regional Public Health nurses Kate MacGregor, Marcia Gawith, Amanda de Cleene and Maxine Mitchell.



Science for Communities

ESR's WHO National Influenza Centre

SHIVERS-II blood samples are brought to ESR's WHO National Influenza Centre based at Wallaceville, Upper Hutt to be processed. Our lab staff have been working tirelessly to register and process the gold and green top tubes of blood that were taken. Look below at the SHIVERS-II FAQs to learn more about the tests we do on these blood samples.

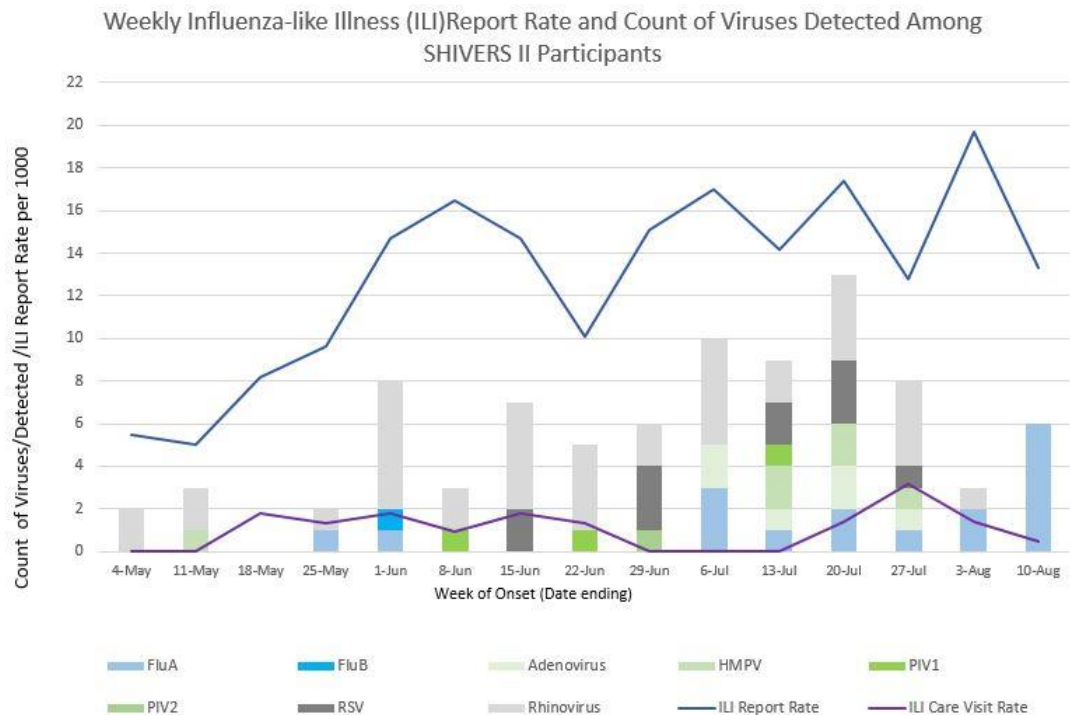
Now that the flu season has started, the lab staff are also testing respiratory swabs for flu and other non-flu respiratory viruses. About 18 flu viruses have been detected so far on these swabs, but this flu season has had a late start and is still continuing. Learn more about the ESR's WHO National Influenza Centre on our website: <https://www.esr.cri.nz/our-services/consultancy/flu-surveillance-and-research/>.



Mandy is responsible for registering all the blood samples into the study database.



Jacqui in the lab isolating PBMCs (white blood cells) which indicate if your body is fighting an infection.



This graph shows the number of respiratory viruses detected among the SHIVERS-II participants from the beginning of May until 10 August (coloured bars). It also shows the rate of Influenza-like illness reported in the same period (blue line).

FAQs for SHIVERS-II Participants

Below are answers to the frequently asked questions from our SHIVERS-II participants. Feel free to get in touch with the team if you have any other questions: ShiversProject@esr.cri.nz.

Do I have to get a FLU vaccine in SHIVERS-II?

No, this is an observational study, so it is up to the study participant to decide about having the flu vaccine. The cost of the vaccine is not covered as part of SHIVERS-II.

What do I do if I am away from Wellington for a while?

As long as the participant can give post-season blood (October – December 2018), they can stay in the study. We can also stop weekly surveys if they do

not want to receive whilst travelling.

What tests are being done on my blood?

Each SHIVERS-II blood draw includes two blood tubes, a green-topped tube and a gold-topped tube. We isolate peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) from the green tube. PBMCs play a critical role in our immune defence against the flu. We count how many of these cells are in the blood at each blood collection. We use the serum, the liquid part of the blood, from the gold tube to see what antibodies to the flu virus and vaccine are active at these different blood draws. Looking at the antibodies and cells across these different time points allows us to learn about what they are doing in response to infection and vaccination.

When will I get the results of the study blood tests?

As the results of the study require the post-season blood samples, it will be late 2019 before the final results will be ready.

When do I get a gift card?

You will receive a \$30 gift card for every collection of samples taken by SCL or our study nurses. You can choose either a physical or electronic card.

We would like to express our thanks once again to our SHIVERS-II participants, those who have made this study possible, and the Wellington region for hosting this project. If you'd like to keep track on flu levels across New Zealand, go to our flu surveillance website: <https://www.esr.cri.nz/our-services/consultancy/flu-surveillance-and-research/>.

If you have any questions, get in touch with the project team: ShiversProject@esr.cri.nz.

Kind regards,

Sue, Claire, Sarah, Ben, Lauren, Robert and Christina



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