

Houston Methodist launches real-time flu tracker website

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Pathologists at Houston Methodist developed a real-time website to track flu cases, just in time to assist physicians, the CDC and patients for the fall 2018 flu season.

The up-to-date information on flu.houstonmethodist.org contains flu epidemiology data covering Houston Methodist's eight-hospital system. In a Nov. 30 journal article in *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*, the Houston Methodist researchers explained how they began developing the website in 2017 when the greater Houston area experienced a major increase in [flu cases](#). The website actively reported on influenza A, influenza B, [respiratory syncytial virus](#) (RSV), and rhinovirus/enterovirus, as well as several other

pathogens.

Physicians frequently request influenza test results to help make informed decisions on how to treat patients in clinic. The website's real-time data helped physicians to treat patients in a timely fashion during the 2017 epidemic. Typically, clinicians and hospitals rely on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That data can be at least a week old, so physicians are often faced with outdated information.

Anyone with [internet access](#) can log onto the website, including those using mobile devices. Viewers can filter information by date intervals (past eight weeks, past year, since 2015) as well as the various pathogens.

Public health officials and the general public can also benefit from monitoring possible flu outbreaks as well as have more awareness of flu activity in the area. While this research paper focused on flu data specific to the Houston Methodist hospital system, possible future applications may including epidemiology data for other infectious diseases.

More information: Paul A Christensen et al, Real-time Communication With Health Care Providers through an Online Respiratory Pathogen Laboratory Report, *Open Forum Infectious Diseases* (2018). [DOI: 10.1093/ofid/ofy322](https://doi.org/10.1093/ofid/ofy322)

Provided by Houston Methodist

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