

By ELLY GRIMM

• Leader & Times

A poll on Gallup.com recently released a list of the states with the highest and lowest cold and flu rates with the end of the season beginning to wind down due to the warmer weather.

Kansas was one of 13 states the Gallup poll found to have the lowest cold and flue rates for the most recent season. The poll shows in Kansas, the average percent of adults who reported having the flu on any given day was only 1.1 percent and the average percent of adults who reported having the cold on any given day was only 4.2 percent. In contrast, the highest cold and flu rates were seen in Nevada and Colorado.



A report on the website for the Center for Disease Control also noted there was only sporadic activity reported for the state of Kansas.

The data shows that here in the local area, there has been an observed decrease in cases of the cold and flu.

According to Charly Madden, a registered nurse and the nurse supervisor at the Seward County Health Department, there has been a decrease in the amount of people visiting the health department with cold and flu problems.

“We are very impressed with that,” she said. “That means that we’re out educating the public and the public’s getting educated and it’s sinking in and they’re doing what they need to be doing to stay healthy.”

Madden added that with this season, the health department ended up giving more than 1,600 doses of the influenza vaccine this year to those who are ages 6 months and older, and pharmacies at Dillon’s, Walgreen’s and Walmart have also contributed to giving vaccinations this season.

She also attributed the decrease in cases of the flu to more people getting vaccinated and following good hygiene, emphasizing good hand washing practices as well as avoiding contact with those who are ill and staying home if they are sick.

There has also been a marked decrease in hospitalizations due to the flu at Southwest Medical Center. During the last flu season, Southwest Medical Center had 132 admissions which had diagnosis codes that corresponded with influenza, compared to the current flu season, which has seen only 56 admissions.

“We are certainly thankful to see a decrease in patients who were hospitalized with influenza this season,” said Keeley Moree, the marketing and development director at Southwest Medical Center. “We believe that the health of our citizens is closely tied to the health and strength of our community as a whole.”

Moree also talked about preventative measures that could be taken by people for the next season, emphasizing the need for getting a flu shot to decrease the flu’s severity for those who

become ill.

“While these vaccines may not be 100 percent effective for everyone, they often lessen the severity of the flu for those who have been vaccinated prior to becoming sick,” she said. “And whether it be receiving the influenza vaccination, sanitizing a shopping cart or staying home when sick, we all play a role in improving community health by taking steps to prevent influenza.”

Moree also said the decrease could be attributed to a number of things, including people taking more hygienic and preventative measures and said it’s possible the population was impacted by a more mild strain of influenza.

“However, we do not have a sole, defining reason for the cause of the decrease,” she acknowledged.

Both Madden and Moree agree that while there is nothing that is 100 percent able to prevent a person from getting the cold and flu, they encourage the flu vaccinations and the aforementioned hygienic practices.

“Southwest Medical Center is focused on providing quality healthcare close to home – caring for our friends and neighbors – so that our community will continue to thrive and prosper,” Moree said.

To see the the rest of the Gallup poll’s results visit:

<http://www.gallup.com/poll/167639/flu-rate-highest-nevada-cold-rate-highest-montana.aspx>

To view the CDC geographic report, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/index.htm#ISTE>