Evaluating Specimen Quality and Results from a Community-Wide, Home-Based Respiratory Surveillance Study

Running Title: Evaluating Home-Based Respiratory Surveillance

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Abstract

Introduction. While influenza and other respiratory pathogens cause significant morbidity and mortality, the community-based burden of these infections remains incompletely understood. The development of novel methods to detect respiratory infections is essential for mitigating epidemics and developing pandemic-preparedness infrastructure.

Methods. From October 2019 to March 2020, we conducted a home-based cross-sectional study in the greater Seattle area, utilizing electronic consent and data collection instruments. Participants received nasal swab collection kits via rapid delivery within 24 hours of self-reporting respiratory symptoms. Samples were returned to the laboratory and were screened for 26 respiratory pathogens and a human marker. Participant data were recorded via online survey at the time of sample collection and one week later.

Results. Of the 4,572 consented participants, 4,359 (95.3%) received a home swab kit, and 3,648 (83.7%) returned a nasal specimen for respiratory pathogen screening. The 3,638 testable samples had a mean RNase P C_RT value of 19.0 (SD: 3.4) and 1,232 (33.9%) samples had positive results for one or more pathogens, including 645 (17.7%) influenza-positive specimens. Among the testable samples, the median time between shipment of the home swab kit and completion of laboratory testing was 8 days [IQR: 7.0-14.0].

Discussion. Home-based surveillance using online participant enrollment and specimen self-collection is a feasible method for community-level monitoring of influenza and other respiratory pathogens, which can readily be adapted for use during pandemics.

Introduction

Acute respiratory illnesses (ARIs) constitute a significant burden on the healthcare system in the United States and represent an important cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide [1-4]. In the United States, influenza causes 140,000 - 810,000 hospitalizations and 12,000 - 67,000 deaths annually [1-4]. Additionally, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) leads to approximately 2 million outpatient visits each year for children under the age of 5 [5,6]. Estimates of the prevalence of ARI-causing pathogens generally rely on in-person healthcare visits or aggregate counts from hospitalized individuals [6-10]. Thus, these estimates likely omit cases of mild to moderate ARI in community-dwelling individuals who may not seek care for their illness [11-13].

Active, community-level monitoring of respiratory infections is essential to assess the seasonal activity of ARI-causing pathogens and can be used to inform public health prevention strategies and influence treatment decisions made at the community level. Previous respiratory pathogen surveillance studies evaluated specific subsets of the population, such as households with children, or used labor-intensive, coordinated efforts to capture a representative sample of the community, which makes such approaches difficult to replicate [14-16]. Additionally, similar to traditional respiratory surveillance networks, some of these studies relied on healthcare facility visits which have the potential to result in the nosocomial spread of respiratory pathogens [17-18]. Despite the limitations of earlier analyses, community-wide surveillance studies remain of vital importance as they provide opportunities to better understand the epidemiology of respiratory illness among symptomatic individuals with variable disease severities and healthcare-seeking behaviors.

The Seattle Flu Study Swab and Send sub-study is a novel, city-wide, cross-sectional study of home-based detection of respiratory pathogens. This study demonstrates the feasibility of using a home-based surveillance approach to assess the epidemiology of influenza and other respiratory pathogens in a community-based setting.

Methods

Study Design

The “Swab and Send” sub-study was nested within the Seattle Flu Study (SFS), a multi-armed influenza surveillance system [19]. This sub-study aimed to assess the feasibility of city-wide home-based cross-sectional respiratory pathogen surveillance, utilizing rapid delivery systems for at home collection of a nasal swab from individuals experiencing ARIs with return of specimens to the laboratory for respiratory pathogen detection. Individuals residing within the greater Seattle area with ARI symptoms were prospectively enrolled from October 2019 - March 2020. Participants resided in 89 different zip codes within King County in and around the city of Seattle. This study was approved by the University of Washington Institutional Review Board.

Recruitment

Study recruitment occurred through 1) referrals from healthcare providers, clinics, Seattle Flu Study community kiosks (an in-person enrollment center), schools, and workplaces, 2) dissemination of printed flyers posted at community locations, and 3) posting of targeted online advertisements (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Google). Recruitment materials directed potential participants to the study website (www.seattleflu.org, henceforth referenced as the “study website”). To determine their eligibility, individuals completed a screening survey on the study website by providing their age, home zip code, and information about the presence and duration of respiratory symptoms and by verifying their access to the internet.

Individuals were eligible to participate in the study if they lived within specified zip codes, had experienced new or worsening cough and/or two ARI symptoms (subjective fever, headache,

sore throat or itchy/scratchy throat, nausea or vomiting, runny/stuffy nose or sneezing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, increased trouble with breathing, diarrhea, ear pain/ discharge, or rash) within seven days of enrollment (Table A1), were English-speaking, had a valid email address, and had access to the internet at home. All individuals consented to participate in the research study electronically, with consent by a parent or legally-authorized representative for individuals under 18 years and concurrent assent for those between 7 and 18 years.

Data Collection

Upon consenting, participants completed an online *Enrollment Questionnaire* to provide their home address and contact information such as an email address or phone number. Participants were mailed a home swab kit within 48 hours of submitting the *Enrollment Questionnaire*, which included a *Quick Start Instruction Card* (Fig. A1), a universal viral transport media (UTM) tube (Becton, Dickinson and Company, Sparks, MD), a nylon flocked mid-turbinate swab (COPAN Diagnostics Inc., Murietta, CA), a return box with an affixed Category B UN3373 label (as required by International Air Transport Association (IATA) guidelines [20]), and a pre-paid return shipping label. Pediatric nasal swabs (COPAN Diagnostics Inc., Murietta, CA) were available for participants 5 years of age or younger. Various couriers were used to deliver home swab kits to participants across King County, depending on geographical location as determined by zip code. For the 2,398 of participants who resided within the city of Seattle, FedEx Same Day City was used to deliver kits with a target delivery time of two hours.

Upon kit receipt, participants completed an online *Illness Questionnaire* to ascertain demographics, illness characteristics, and health behaviors. Education level was only asked to participants 18 and older. Additionally, participants were asked to rate the impact of their current illness on regular activities at the time of their enrollment using a five-point Likert scale with the following levels: not at all, a little bit, somewhat, quite a bit, or very much. These categories were transformed into none, low (a little bit, somewhat), and high (quite a bit, very much).

At the end of the *Illness Questionnaire*, participants were prompted to self-collect a mid-nasal swab using the provided *Quick Start Instruction Card* (Fig. S1) included in the swab kit box. Participants were instructed to place their self-collected nasal swabs directly into the UTM tube which was pre-labeled with a unique sample barcode. Next, participants were instructed to place the UTM tube containing the self-collected nasal swab into a specimen bag, pre-packaged with an absorbent sheet, and then to put the specimen bag into the provided return shipping box. United States Postal Service (USPS) return postage and Category B UN3373 stickers were affixed to the outside of the return box. Although previous testing has demonstrated that respiratory viral RNA is stable at room-temperature in UTM for up to one week [21], participants were encouraged to return their nasal specimen within 24 hours or as soon as possible. For the subset of participants where detailed courier data was available, median delivery times were determined through the use of proof of delivery (POD) data on scheduled shipment times, completed delivery times, and mileage.

154 Seven days after nasal swab collection, participants were re-contacted to complete a *One Week*
155 *Follow-Up Questionnaire* to assess the impact of their illness on behavioral outcomes such as
156 absenteeism and healthcare-seeking behaviors (provider visits, antiviral use, etc). Care-seeking
157 was marked as "any care" if the participant indicated they had sought care in the *Illness*
158 *Questionnaire* or *One Week Follow-Up Questionnaire*. Any care-seeking included doctor's office
159 or urgent care, pharmacy, hospital or emergency department, or other.
160
161 All study questionnaires were collected through REDCap (Table A3) [22]. A full timeline of study
162 events may be found in Table A2. Access to de-identified, aggregate study data and analysis
163 code will be publicly available on the study website.
164
165 *Laboratory Testing*
166 When kits arrived in the study laboratory, contents of the box and deviations from return mail
167 instructions were recorded. 200 µl of UTM was removed and subjected to RNA extraction using
168 a MagNA Pure 96 System (Roche) and the remainder was banked at -80°C. The extracted
169 nucleic acids were screened for respiratory pathogens using a custom, TaqMan-based Open
170 Array panel (Thermo Fisher) and an additional SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR research assay. Samples
171 were subjected to the SARS-CoV-2 assay in real-time if they were collected after February 25,
172 2020 and retrospectively if collected between January 1, 2020 and February 24, 2020 (Table A4)
173 [23]. Samples with RNase P relative cycle threshold (C_{RT}) values ≤28 for the Open Array assay,
174 which has a preamplification step, and ≤36 for the SARS-CoV-2 assay were considered to
175 contain sufficient material for pathogen detection [24]. Samples were screened for influenza A

176 H3N2, H1N1, and pan influenza A, influenza B, influenza C, respiratory syncytial viruses (RSV) A
177 and B, human coronaviruses (hCoV) 229E, NL63, OC43, and HKU1, SARS-CoV-2, adenovirus
178 (AdV), human rhinovirus (hRV), human metapneumovirus (hMPV), human parechovirus (hPeV),
179 enteroviruses A, B, C, D, D68, and G, human bocavirus (hBoV), *Streptococcus pneumoniae*,
180 *Mycoplasma pneumoniae*, and *Chlamydia pneumoniae* (Table A4). C_{RT} values for RNase P,
181 influenza, hCoV, RSV, and hRV from 11,984 nasal samples collected between October 2019 to
182 March 2020 at Seattle Children's Hospital were analyzed as a contemporary control of
183 healthcare worker-collected specimens and compared to the self-collected specimens in this
184 study.
185
186 *Data Analyses*
187 Descriptive statistics were performed for categorical and continuous covariates. Bivariate
188 analyses were conducted using parametric and nonparametric tests as appropriate, with
189 statistical significance defined as $p<0.05$. The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to determine p-
190 values for study procedure compliance categories, comparing each of the three nasal swab
191 error types to those with no errors. ANOVA was used to calculate an overall p-value for RNase P
192 values across confidence and discomfort levels. Respiratory pathogen prevalence is defined as
193 the total number of cases detected out of the total number of tested samples.
194
195 **Results**
196
197 *Participant Characteristics*

198 A total of 4,572 participants were consented and enrolled in the SFS Swab and Send sub-study
199 from October 16, 2019 to March 9, 2020. The majority of participants were recruited into the
200 study through online or social media advertisements (53.9%) or through referrals from friends
201 or family (19.3%). Of the 4,572 participants who completed the electronic consent form, 4,359
202 (95.3%) participants also completed the *Enrollment Questionnaire* and provided a valid home
203 address, which was required to receive a home swab kit. Participant characteristics, including
204 age, sex, race, Hispanic ethnicity, income, education level, influenza vaccination status,
205 healthcare-seeking status, test results, baseline impact of illness on regular activities, and
206 recruitment method are shown in Table 1. The mean age of study participants was 36.6 (SD: 15)
207 years old. Most (73.7%) of participants were 18-49 years old. On average, the study population
208 was more highly educated and had a higher household income than the general population of
209 King County. A total of 31.4% of participants had a bachelor's degree as their highest degree
210 while 31.6% had an advanced degree. 26.6% had a household income of ≥ $150,000 per year
211 (Table 1).
212
213 At time of enrollment, 42.0% of participants who were sent a nasal swab rated the impact of
214 their current illness on their regular activities as high although 67.5% had not sought clinical
215 care. The majority of study participants did not seek clinical care for their illness during the
216 study period. A total of 27.1% of participants sought clinical care for their current illness prior to
217 enrollment or during the study period whereas 50.1% never sought clinical care during this time
218 frame (Table 1). In general, participants who sought care were more likely to do so after
219 enrolling and completing their home swab kits. Among those who sought care (N=1,178), 727

220 (61.7%) participants sought care prior to enrollment and 989 (84.0%) sought care within one
221 week after enrollment, though these categories are not mutually exclusive.
222
223 Of the 4,359 participants who received a home swab kit, 3,648 (83.7%) returned a nasal
224 specimen to the laboratory and 3,638 (99.7%) of returned specimens contained sufficient UTM
225 in the tube and RNase P levels for respiratory pathogen screening (Fig. 1). Influenza A (10.8%),
226 hRV (10.4%), hCoV (8.6%), and influenza B (6.9%) were the most commonly detected pathogens
227 (Table A5; Fig. 2). Samples collected on or after January 1, 2020 were tested for SARS-CoV-2, of
228 which 36 out of 2,843 (1.2%) were positive for the novel coronavirus. The 3,629 self-collected
229 nasal specimens with available RNase P data yielded a mean RNase P C_{RT} value of 19.0 (SD: 3.4)
230 (Table A5). A contemporary comparison of C_{RT} values from healthcare worker-collected nasal
231 specimens to self-collected nasal specimens is shown in Table A6.
232
233 *Study Logistics*
234 For the 4,359 participants who received a home swab kit, the median time between participant
235 completion of enrollment and scheduling of the shipment was 7.2 hours [IQR: 0.45-19.6]. The
236 total median delivery transit time to participants who received their home swab kit via FedEx
237 Same Day City was 2.2 [IQR: 1.7 - 3.0] hours with 79% of deliveries meeting the two-hour target
238 delivery time. A subset of the delivery time data was reported previously [25]. The median
239 delivery time via FedEx Same Day City to participants' homes by distance from the study
240 laboratory is shown in Fig. 3. Of the 2,398 FedEx Same Day City deliveries, there were a total of
241 78 (3.3%) redelivery attempts. The estimated median time between nasal swab collection to

receipt at the study laboratory was 3.0 [IQR: 2.0, 4.0] days for the 3,648 participants who returned specimens. Of the 3,638 testable samples, the median time between shipment and completed laboratory testing was 8.0 [IQR: 7.0 - 14.0] days (Table 2).

Study Procedure Completion and Compliance

Study procedure completion rates are shown in Fig. 1. Of the 4,359 participants who completed the *Enrollment Questionnaire* and received a home swab kit, 3,214 (73.9%) completed all study procedures. Study procedure completion and compliance by age, sex, income, education, care-seeking status, and baseline illness-impact are shown in Table 3. None of these variables were significantly associated with study procedure compliance (Table 3).

The majority of participants correctly followed instructions to package their collected nasal swab for return to the laboratory. Of the 3,648 returned nasal specimens, 3,208 (88.1%) home swab kits were returned correctly packaged. A total of 205 (5.6%) contained a sample tube labeling error, such as a missing written name or collection date, and 205 (5.6%) were mispackaged. Criteria for mispackaged samples included improper use of the provided return box, specimen transport bag, or lack thereof. Additionally, 24 (0.66%) returned specimens had a sample tube use error, such as a damaged UTM tube, a missing or misused nasal swab, or leakage. Four out of 3,648 (0.11%) returned home swab kits contained leakage and these samples were immediately disposed of upon unpackaging (Table 3).

263 Participants who enrolled between January 6, 2020 and March, 9, 2020 were asked to rate their
264 confidence in correctly self-collecting their nasal swab and their discomfort level while doing so.
265 Higher confidence and discomfort levels were significantly associated with lower RNase P C_{RT}
266 values ($p<0.001$ and $p=0.04$, respectively). The average RNase P C_{RT} value for participants who
267 experienced strong discomfort was 1.4 lower than the average value for those who had no
268 discomfort. The average RNase P C_{RT} value for those who were very confident was 1.2 lower
269 than those who were not confident at all (Fig. 4). Among the 4,359 participants who received a
270 home swab kit, there was one (0.0%) reported adverse event related to strong discomfort while
271 collecting the nasal swab. The affected participant's discomfort resolved within two minutes.
272 The participant suffered no long-term effects and did not require medical attention. Results
273 suggest that non-medically trained individuals can safely and adequately collect a nasal sample
274 from themselves or their family members.
275
276 **Discussion**
277
278 Over the 2019-2020 influenza season, we enrolled a large cohort of participants with acute
279 respiratory illness in a study of home-based swab collection for detection of respiratory
280 pathogens. The majority of participants completed all study procedures and returned their
281 nasal specimens to the study laboratory in a timely manner and in compliance with federal
282 transport guidelines for biohazards. The majority of returned nasal specimens were adequately
283 self-collected as quantified by RNase P C_{RT} value. These results support the feasibility of using

online enrollment and self-collected nasal swabs for community surveillance of respiratory pathogens.

Existing methods to estimate the community-level prevalence of influenza rely on estimator models based on laboratory-confirmed cases and adjusted for various confounding factors including medical care seeking, collection and testing of specimens, and reporting of cases. These methods are limited to medically attended illnesses and require relatively comprehensive data for accuracy, which leads to long periods of time between data collection and the availability of results [19]. In this study, we directly surveyed for influenza and other respiratory pathogens in the community allowing rapid assessment of pathogen characteristics and the associated clinical presentations among both care-seeking and non-care-seeking study populations. When combined with estimator models, on-the-ground surveillance of community-dwelling individuals with less severe illness and a wider range of demographic backgrounds may enhance our understanding of the burden of various respiratory pathogens in a community.

Similarly, estimator models with complete reliance on laboratory-confirmed cases can be limiting, especially during epidemics or pandemics in heavily-affected regions where outbreak dynamics are rapidly evolving and the capacity of the healthcare system to adequately test cases has been exceeded [19]. The benefits of direct, home-based surveillance among community-dwelling individuals can be seen in context of the current COVID-19 pandemic. From January 1, 2020 to March 9, 2020, the Seattle Flu Study detected 78 cases of SARS-CoV-2

306 through direct sampling of community members including the first documented case of
307 community transmission in the US, with 36 cases identified through the Swab and Send sub-
308 study [25, 26]. This study enrolled and tested a large cohort of individuals with ARI symptoms
309 across a large geographical area, half of whom did not seek clinical care prior to or during the
310 study period. The at home study design proved to be an effective means of studying individuals
311 infected with influenza and other respiratory pathogens, many of whom may not have been
312 captured by traditional clinic or hospital surveillance. This demonstrates that when faced with
313 an emerging infectious disease, home-based testing can identify cases among non-care-seeking
314 individuals, providing essential information for pandemic identification, spread, and
315 management.
316
317 Limitations of this study include the enrollment of a study population that was not
318 representative of the greater Seattle area. King County demographic data from the 2010 census
319 shows that 49.8% of residents were male and 21.4% were 17 years of age and under, whereas
320 our study population included 27.3% males and 7.7% minors. Additionally, the King County
321 population is 6.0% black or African American and 8.9% Hispanic individuals whereas our study
322 cohort was only 0.8% black or African American and 4.2% Hispanic. The median King County
323 household income in 2016 was $78,800 per year whereas the largest proportion (26.6%) of
324 participants had a household income of greater than $150,000 per year [27]. We hypothesize
325 that factors related to lack of internet access and unfamiliarity with online systems may have
326 contributed to lack of representativeness among certain groups in our study population. The
327 utilization of targeted recruitment strategies aimed at enrolling a larger proportion of

328 participants who were underrepresented in this cohort including males, children, minorities,
329 and individuals of lower socioeconomic statuses could be implemented to yield a more
330 representative study population.
331
332 Additionally, while most participants returned their home swab kits with no packaging or
333 sample tube use errors at a rate concordant with a previous study [28], improvements to
334 instructions (e.g. inclusion of instructional videos) may decrease these error rates. Further
335 limitations of this study include use of self-collected mid-nasal swabs, which are not the gold
336 standard for respiratory pathogen detection. However, our group has previously demonstrated
337 that self-collected mid-nasal swabs are highly concordant with health care worker-collected
338 nasopharyngeal swabs for detection of SARS-CoV-2 [29], with results comparable to those of
339 previous studies on the detection of viral pathogens by patient-collected mid-nasal swabs [30-
340 33]. In addition, the contemporary control analysis included in this study shows that C_{RT} values
341 for pathogen-positive samples collected by healthcare workers are comparable to those of self-
342 collected samples, with C_{RT} values for healthcare-collected swabs lower for some targets but
343 higher for others than self-collected swabs. Finally, the requirement of internet access and
344 delivery addresses that are easily accessible by standard shipping couriers may limit the
345 scalability of this method in low resource or rural settings.
346
347 In conclusion, at home surveillance with self-collected nasal swabs is a feasible method to study
348 the community-based prevalence of influenza during seasonal epidemics on a city-wide scale.
349 This methodology can be adapted to study a variety of respiratory pathogens affecting diverse

study populations with the ability to scale-up to larger sample sizes. In particular, this approach allows for the inclusion of non-care-seeking individuals in respiratory pathogen surveillance studies and may be especially useful during epidemics or pandemics when quarantine and social distancing measures are in place to reduce transmission risks.

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Competing Interests

Helen Y. Chu receives research support from Sanofi, Cepheid, and Genentech/Roche and is a consultant for Merck and GlaxoSmithKline. Janet Englund receives research support from GlaxoSmithKline, AstraZeneca, Merck, and Novavax, and is a consultant for Sanofi Pasteur and Meissa Vaccines. Michael Boeckh receives research support and serves as a consultant for Ansun Biopharma, Gilead Sciences, Janssen, and Vir Biotechnology; and serves as a consultant to GSK, ReViral, ADMA, Allovir, Pulmocdie and Moderna. Ashley E. Kim, Elisabeth Brandstetter, Chelsey Graham, Denise J. McCulloch, Jessica Heimonen, Amanda M. Casto, Peter D. Han, Lea M. Starita, Deborah A. Nickerson, Margaret M. Van de Loo, Jennifer Mooney, Mark J. Rieder, Misja Ilcisin, Kairsten A. Fay, Jover Lee, Thomas R. Sibley, and Trevor Bedford declare no competing interests.

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527 10.1016/j.jcv.2019.07.010

528 **Table 1:** Clinical and sociodemographic characteristics of enrolled participants, October 16, 2019 -

529 March 9, 2020

	N=4,359 (%)
Age	
<5y	128 (2.9%)
5-17y	208 (4.8%)
18-49y	3212 (73.7%)
50-64y	614 (14.1%)
>=65y	192 (4.4%)
Sex	
Male	1191 (27.3%)
Female	2451 (56.2%)
Other	19 (0.4%)
Race	
American Indian/ Alaska Native	17 (0.4%)
Asian	724 (16.6%)
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	7 (0.2%)
Black/African American	37 (0.8%)
White	2542 (58.3%)
Other	92 (2.1%)
Multiple	188 (4.3%)
Hispanic ethnicity (N=2856)	183 (4.2%)
Income	
≤$25K	196 (4.5%)
$25-50K	367 (8.4%)
$50-100K	860 (19.7%)
$100-150K	738 (16.9%)
≥$150K	1160 (26.6%)
Education level	

Graduated high school/obtained GED or less	109 (2.5%)
Some college (including vocational training, associate's degree)	492 (11.3%)
Bachelor's degree	1371 (31.5%)
Advanced degree	1377 (31.6%)
Care-seeking	
Any care prior to enrollment or during study period	1182 (27.1%)
No care prior to enrollment or during study period	2183 (50.1%)
Illness impact on regular activities at enrollment	
None	243 (5.6%)
Low	1597 (36.6%)
High	1831 (42.0%)
How participant heard about the study	
Saw an ad on Facebook/Instagram/Twitter	1369 (31.4%)
Referral from a friend/family member	841 (19.3%)
Other online	667 (15.3%)
Saw an ad on Google	314 (7.2%)
Referral from my place of work	280 (6.4%)
Other	172 (3.9%)
Saw a Seattle Flu Study kiosk	86 (2.0%)
Email/Seattle Community Pulse	86 (2.0%)
Referral from a healthcare provider, travel clinic, or immigrant/refugee health screening	60 (1.4%)
Referral from my child's school	29 (0.7%)

530

531 **Table 2**: Study Logistics & Turnaround Time Metrics
532

Metric	Time (Median [IQR])
Completed enrollment to shipment scheduled (hours)[a]	7.2 [0.45-19.6]
Delivery time to participant's home (hours)[b]	2.2 [1.7-3.0]
Nasal swab collection to returned specimen received at the laboratory (days)[c]	3.0 [2.0-4.0]
Shipment of home swab kit to participant's home to completed laboratory testing (days)[d]	8.0 [7.0-14.0]

533
534 [a] Time between participant completion of the *Enrollment Questionnaire* and scheduled shipment of the
535 home swab kit
536 [b] FedEx Same Day City was used to rapidly deliver home swab kits within the city of Seattle. Median
537 FedEx Same Day City delivery times from ordering the shipment to arrival at the participant's residence,
538 adjusting for redeliveries.
539 [c] Estimated time between nasal swab collection, measured by completion of the *Illness Questionnaire &*
540 *Nasal Swab Collection* survey, and the return of completed home swab kits at the laboratory. Completed
541 home swab kits were returned via pre-paid USPS Priority Mail.
542 [d] Time between scheduled shipment of home swab kits to participants' homes and available results for
543 tested specimens

544 **Table 3:** Clinical and sociodemographic characteristics of enrolled participants, October 16, 2019 -

545 March 9, 2020 by study procedure completion and compliance

	Study procedure completion		Study procedure compliance				
	Returned Nasal Swab N=3638	Completed All Study Procedures N=3214	Mail Packaging Error† N=205	Sample Tube Use Error§ N=24	Sample Tube Labeling Error¶ N=205	No Packaging or Sample Tube Errors N=3211	P value*
Age							0.11
<5y	110 (3.0%)	89 (2.8%)	9 (4.4%)	1 (4.2%)	6 (2.9%)	92 (2.9%)	
5-17y	173 (4.8%)	149 (4.6%)	12 (5.9%)	0 (0%)	16 (7.8%)	149 (4.6%)	
18-49y	2638 (72.5%)	2324 (72.3%)	144 (70.2%)	15 (62.5%)	141 (68.8%)	2339 (72.8%)	
50-64y	545 (15.0%)	496 (15.4%)	33 (16.1%)	6 (25.0%)	29 (14.1%)	480 (14.9%)	
>=65y	168 (4.6%)	153 (4.8%)	6 (2.9%)	2 (8.3%)	10 (4.9%)	150 (4.7%)	
Sex							0.38
Male	1142 (31.4%)	1013 (31.5%)	70 (34.1%)	8 (33.3%)	70 (34.1%)	994 (31.0%)	
Female	2340 (64.3%)	2178 (67.8%)	115 (56.1%)	13 (54.2%)	118 (57.6%)	2097 (65.3%)	
Other	18 (0.5%)	15 (0.5%)	3 (1.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (0.5%)	14 (0.4%)	
Income							0.81
<= $25K	180 (4.9%)	161 (5.0%)	5 (2.5%)	1 (4.2%)	9 (4.4%)	164 (5.1%)	
$25-50K	344 (9.5%)	315 (9.8%)	21 (10.3%)	2 (8.3%)	27 (13.2%)	294 (9.2%)	
$50-100K	818 (22.5%)	760 (23.6%)	39 (19.0%)	10 (41.7%)	49 (23.9%)	716 (22.3%)	
$100-150K	700 (19.2%)	639 (19.9%)	33 (16.1%)	2 (8.3%)	32 (15.6%)	635 (19.8%)	
>=$150K	1129 (31.0%)	1042 (32.4%)	69 (33.7%)	6 (25.0%)	48 (23.4%)	1010 (31.5%)	
Education level							0.53

Graduated high school/obtained GED or less	101 (2.8%)	80 (2.5%)	9 (4.4%)	0 (0%)	10 (4.9%)	81 (2.5%)	
Some college (including vocational training, associate's degree)	449 (12.3%)	414 (12.9%)	20 (9.8%)	5 (20.8%)	32 (15.6%)	395 (12.3%)	
Bachelor's degree	1324 (36.4%)	1220 (38.0%)	67 (32.7%)	5 (20.8%)	58 (28.3%)	1189 (37.0%)	
Advanced degree	1328 (36.5%)	1229 (38.2%)	68 (33.2%)	10 (41.7%)	66 (32.2%)	1188 (37.0%)	
Care-seeking							0.80
Any care prior to enrollment or during study period	1138 (31.3%)	1077 (33.5%)	52 (25.4%)	7 (29.2%)	63 (30.7%)	1013 (31.5%)	
No care prior to enrollment or during study period	2136 (58.7%)	2136 (66.5%)	114 (55.6%)	13 (54.2%)	105 (51.2%)	1912 (59.5%)	
Illness impact on regular activities at enrollment							0.07
None	234 (6.4%)	203 (6.3%)	17 (8.3%)	1 (4.2%)	11 (5.4%)	205 (6.4%)	
Low	1521 (41.8%)	1373 (42.7%)	90 (43.9%)	10 (41.7%)	73 (35.6%)	1345 (41.9%)	
High	1754 (48.2%)	1637 (50.9%)	81 (39.5%)	10 (41.7%)	107 (52.2%)	1564 (48.7%)	

* Kruskal-Wallis test used to determine p-values for study procedure compliance categories (excludes first three columns)

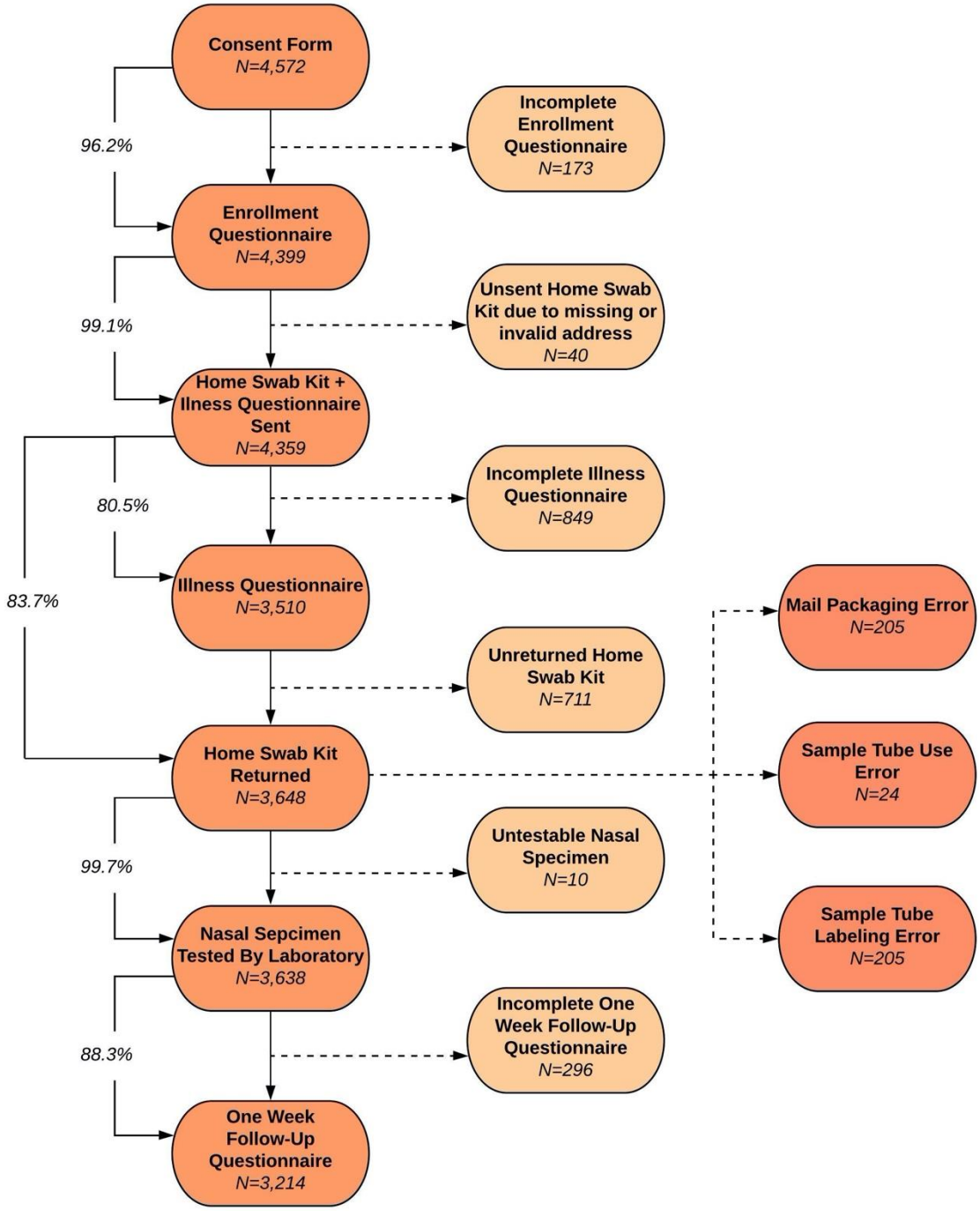
† Mail packaging errors include returning the nasal specimen in a damaged box, a different box than the one provided, an improperly closed box, or an improperly used specimen transport bag or lack thereof

§ Sample tube use errors include returned nasal specimens with a damaged or broken UTM tube, an absent swab, or leakage

¶ Sample tube labeling errors include a missing written full name or date of collection on the UTM tube

554 **Figure 1:** Study procedure completion rates

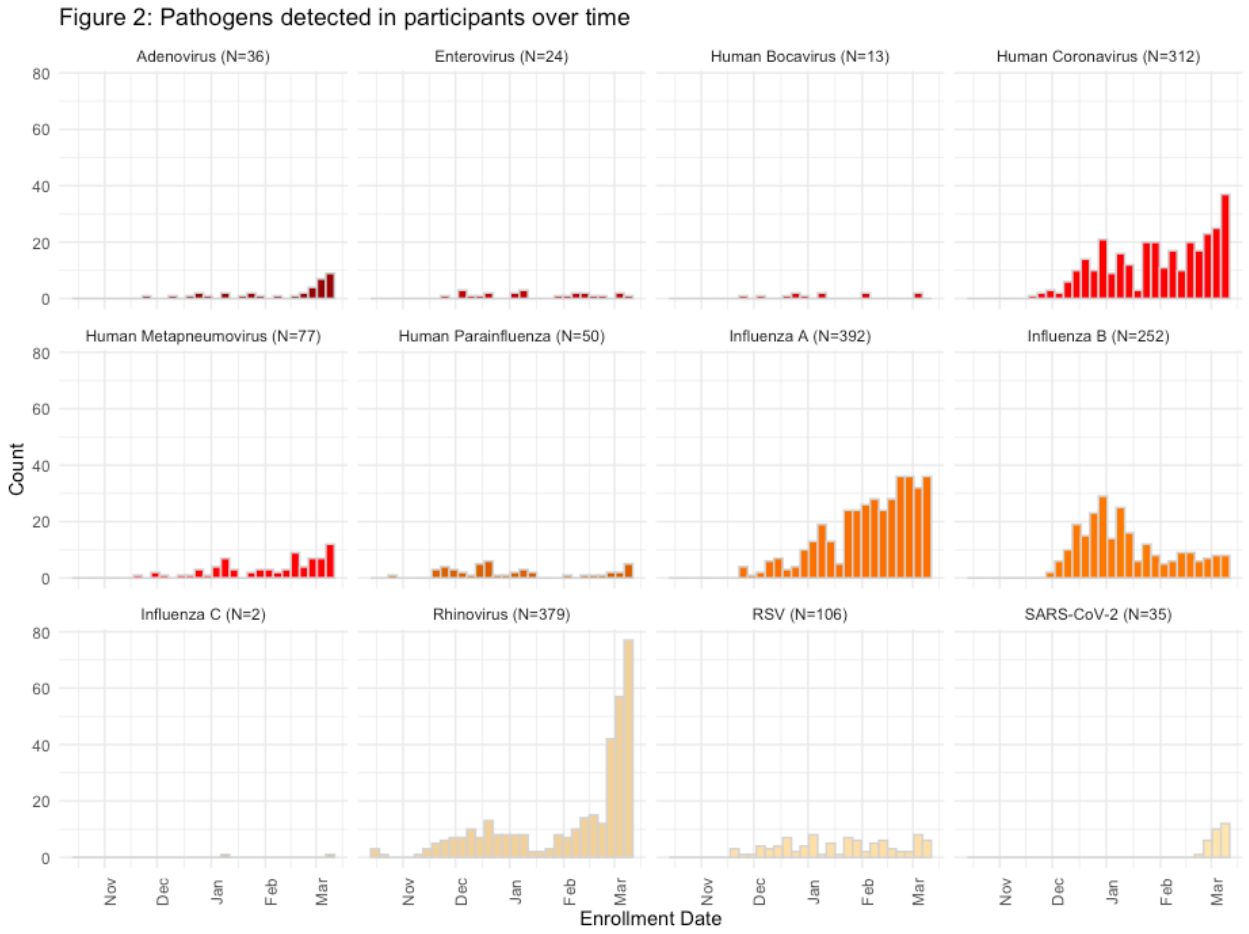
555



556

557 **Figure 2:** Pathogens detected in participants over time

558



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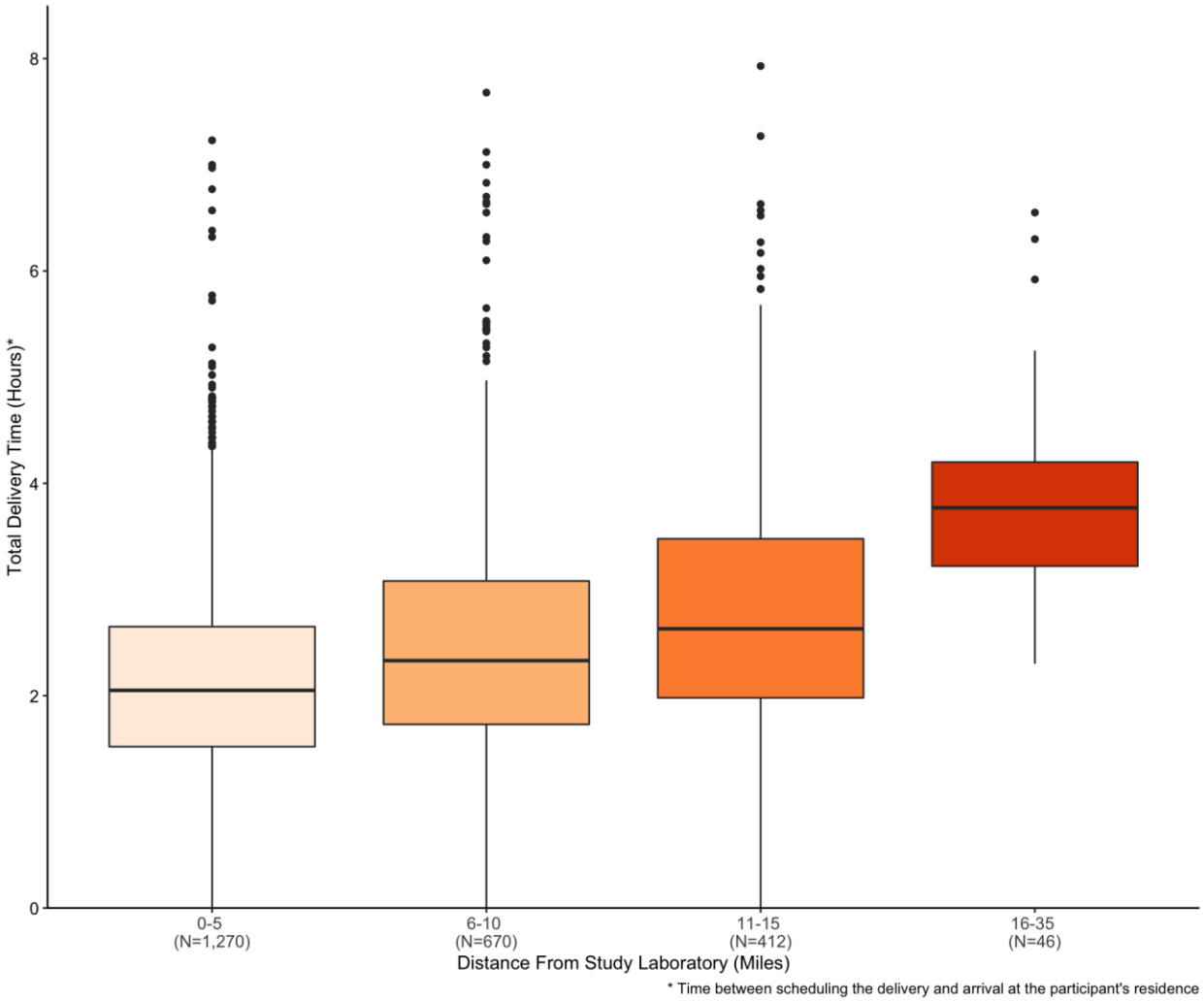
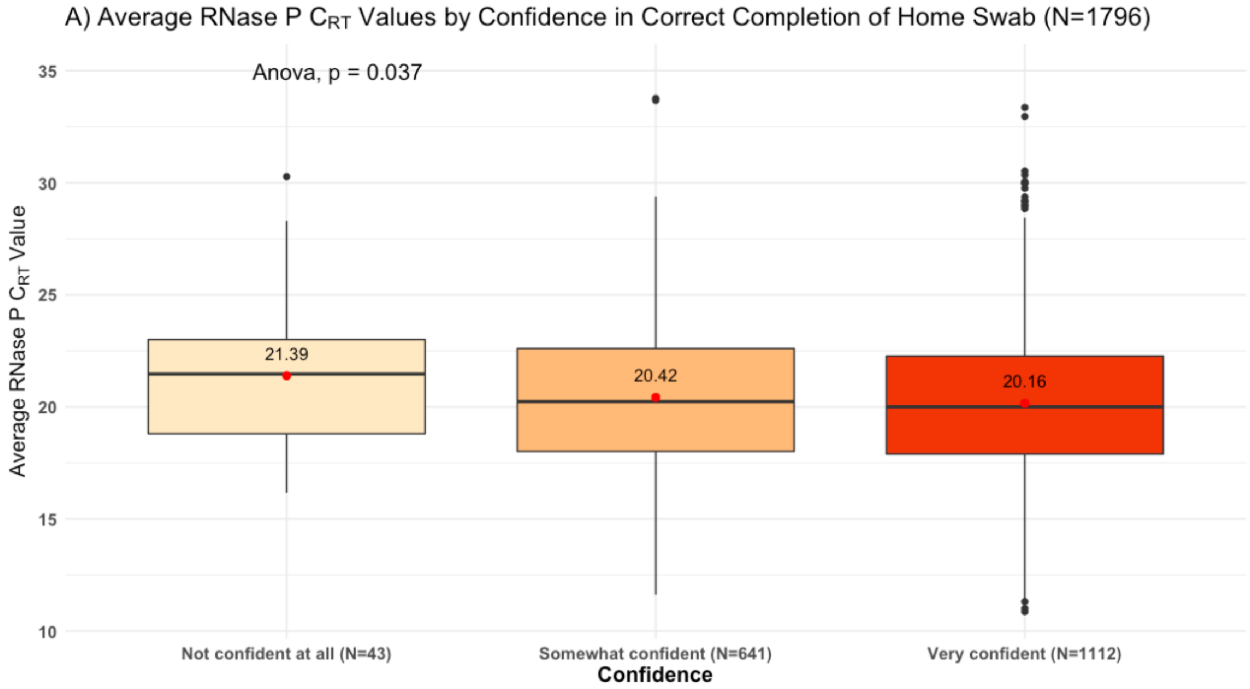
560 **Figure 3:** Median delivery times of home swab kits to participants by distance from study laboratory
561 (N=2,398)



562

563 **Figure 4:** Average RNase P C_{RT} values by discomfort of and confidence in home swab collection

564



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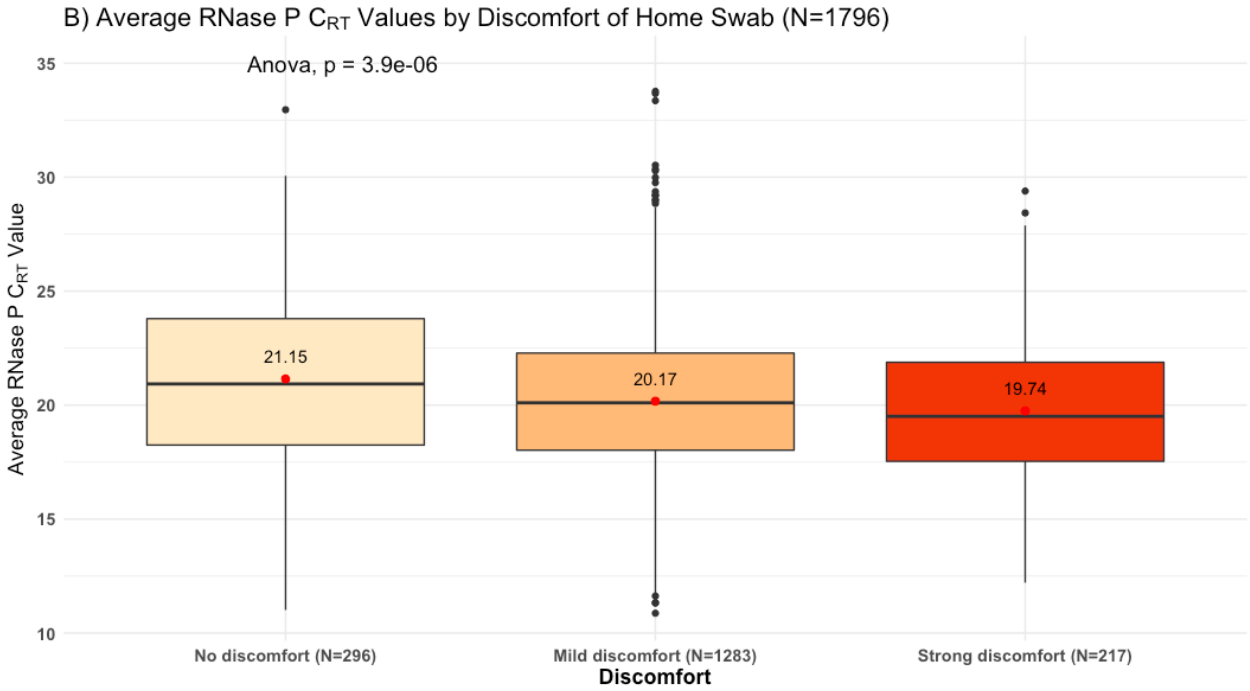

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