

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

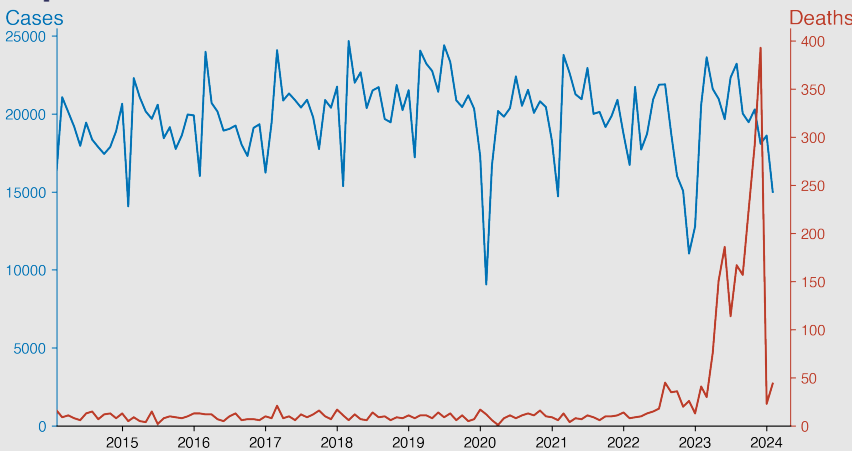
Hepatitis C

February 2024

Introduction

Hepatitis C is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). This bloodborne virus leads to hepatic inflammation and can vary in severity, varying from a mild illness lasting a few weeks to a serious, lifelong condition. Chronic hepatitis C can cause liver cirrhosis, liver cancer, and liver failure. It is spread through contaminated blood, such as through needle sharing or transfusions with infected blood. While acute hepatitis C is often asymptomatic, chronic infection can lead to significant morbidity and mortality. Treatments have advanced substantially, with direct-acting antivirals offering a high cure rate.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- Hepatitis C mortality in Chinese mainland has significantly increased since 2022, peaking in December 2023 at 393 deaths.
- Despite a reduction in reported cases from November 2022 to February 2024, the fatality ratio has risen.
- Peak cases occurred in March 2018 and 2023, suggesting potential seasonality in transmission.
- From February 2020, fewer cases were reported, possibly due to COVID-19 precautions; however, Hepatitis C deaths have since drastically increased.

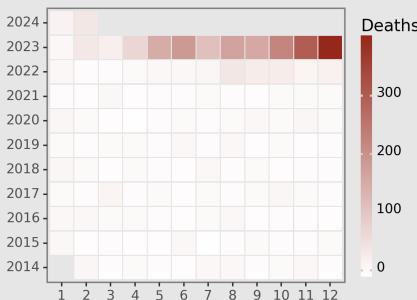
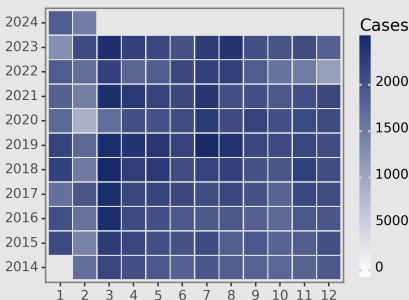
Cases Analysis

Hepatitis C cases in the Chinese mainland from February 2014 to February 2024 show periodic fluctuations with a relatively stable trend from 2014 to 2019. Starting in 2020, there is a notable decrease, with the lowest reported cases (9,068) in February 2020. This could be due to health service disruptions during the COVID-19 outbreak. From 2021, cases gradually return to the previous average levels but reveal a significant reduction again in December 2022. Case numbers slightly recover in early 2024, indicative of fluctuating surveillance or reporting.

Deaths Analysis

The number of deaths due to Hepatitis C from 2014 to 2019 was relatively low, with no more than 21 recorded in any month. However, there was a significant increase in death rates towards the end of 2022 which continued to surge through 2023. Between August and December 2023, death numbers advanced past three-digit figures, reaching the highest of 393 in December 2023. Remarkably, the death rates dropped to two-digits again in January 2024, with continuous decreases into February. Overall, the latter data suggests a concerning rise in Hepatitis C fatality rates over recent years.

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