

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

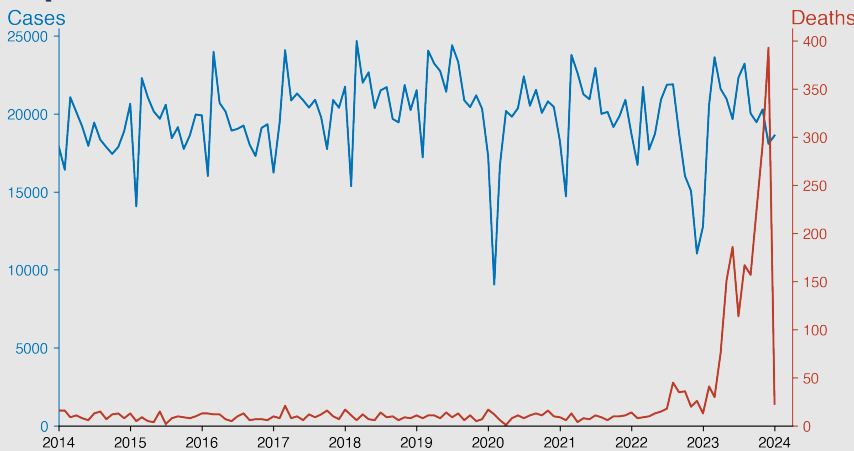
Hepatitis C

January 2024

Introduction

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that primarily affects the liver, leading to inflammation. It's caused by the Hepatitis C virus (HCV) and is transmitted through contaminated blood, such as through shared needles or unscreened blood transfusions. Many individuals with Hepatitis C may not exhibit symptoms initially, but chronic infection can lead to serious liver damage, including cirrhosis and liver cancer. Diagnosis is through blood tests, and while there's no vaccine, antiviral medications can cure most cases. Preventive measures focus on reducing the risk of transmission.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- A dramatic increase in Hepatitis C-related deaths from April 2023, peaking in December with 393 deaths, despite relatively stable case numbers.
- Significant decrease in reported cases and deaths in January 2024, indicating a potential improvement in the disease situation or changes in reporting.
- A notable surge in cases and deaths in the latter half of 2022, with deaths particularly escalating in August 2022, highlighting a concerning trend in disease severity or fatality rate.
- Fluctuations in monthly reported cases over the years, with a general increase in the early years followed by more variability and a recent alarming rise in mortality rates.

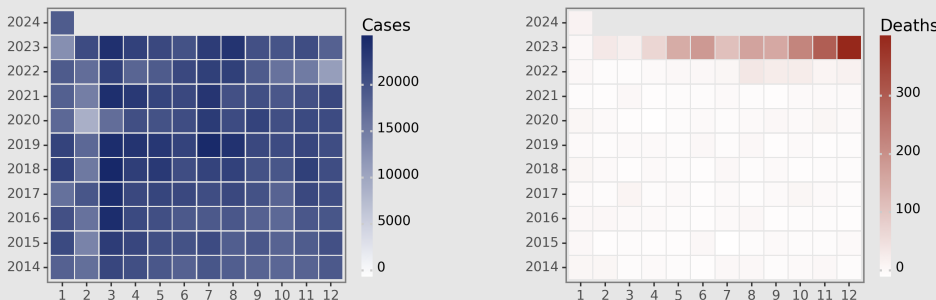
Cases Analysis

The Hepatitis C cases in Chinese mainland exhibit fluctuations across the observed years, with a general trend of increment and decrement without clear escalation until 2023, which shows a significant decrease. The years 2014-2017 show relatively stable figures, albeit with minor fluctuations. A notable decrease is observed in 2020, possibly due to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting healthcare reporting and access. However, the dramatic drop in cases in 2022 and particularly in 2023 suggests an underreporting or a change in diagnostic/reporting criteria, requiring further investigation.

Deaths Analysis

The death toll from Hepatitis C in mainland China remained relatively low and stable from 2014 to 2021, with deaths rarely exceeding 20 per month despite fluctuations in case numbers. However, a dramatic increase in fatalities is observed starting in August 2022, culminating in a stark rise through 2023, with deaths in December reaching 393. This surge in mortality could be attributed to several factors, including the progression of untreated or inadequately treated cases to severe liver disease, changes in the virus's virulence, or possibly a lag in the healthcare system's ability to manage the increasing case load effectively.

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