

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Project

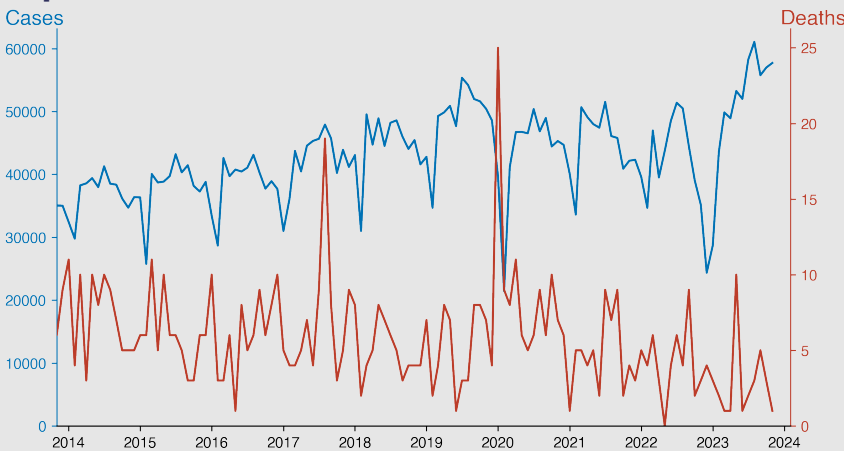
Syphilis

November 2023

Introduction

Syphilis is a sexually transmitted bacterial infection caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. It progresses through four distinct stages: primary, secondary, latent, and tertiary. Symptoms vary at each stage, making it often hard to diagnose. Early stages present sores or rashes, whereas late stages can affect major organs, leading to severe complications, even death. It's largely spread through sexual contact, including vaginal, anal and oral sex, but can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy. Preventive measures include using condoms and regular testing. Early detection allows effective treatment using antibiotics.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- There is a marked increase in syphilis cases in China from 25,577 in January 2010 to 57,719 in November 2023, despite relatively low mortality throughout the period.
- The recorded deaths remained low with single-digit figures most of the time, with occasional spikes (e.g., 19 deaths in August 2017, 25 deaths in January 2020).
- A significant decrease to 21,448 cases in February 2020 likely reflects the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on healthcare reporting systems.
- The disease trend does not exhibit clear seasonality, indicating transmission may be influenced by non-seasonal factors.

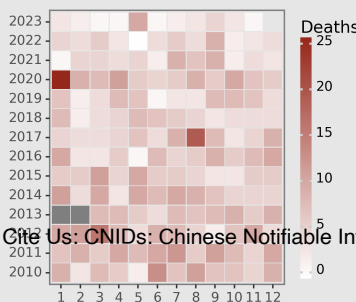
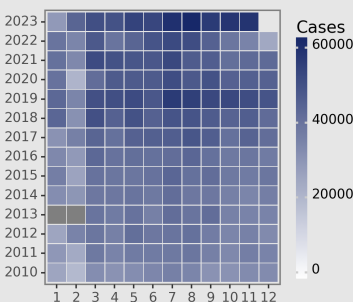
Cases Analysis

From 2010 to 2023, reported syphilis cases in Chinese mainland showed an overall increasing trend. Initial cases rose from around 25,577 in January 2010 to peak figures above 60,000 by August 2023, indicating a growing public health concern. Seasonal fluctuations are apparent, with cases generally increasing in warmer months, possibly due to increased sexual activity. A sharp decline in reported cases in February 2020 coincides with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting potential impacts on sexual health services or reporting.

Deaths Analysis

The death toll from syphilis in Chinese mainland remains low across the period, with monthly deaths rarely exceeding 10 and often below 5. The most significant spike of 25 deaths was recorded in January 2020, which is an outlier compared to the overall data. The low mortality rate suggests effective treatment options are available; however, the consistent occurrence of deaths highlights ongoing challenges in managing syphilis, emphasizing the need for continuous public health interventions and access to care.

Distribution



Cite Us: CNIDs: Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Project.

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Version: 2024-01-05 (UTC+)