Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

Hepatitis C

November 2023

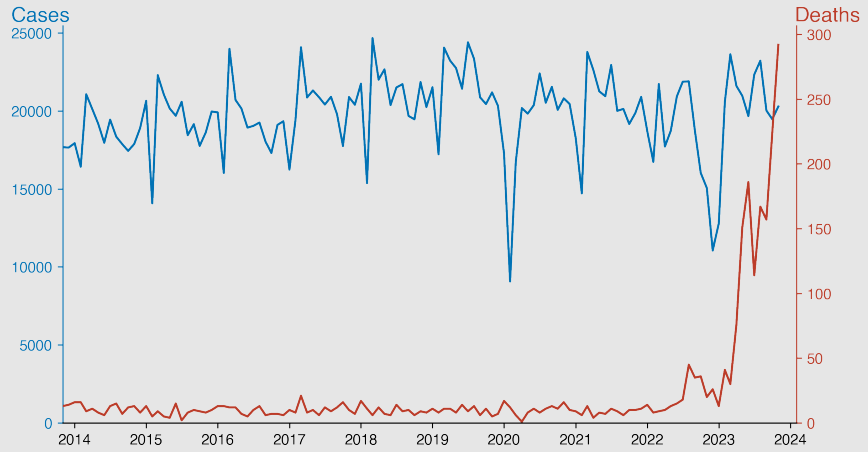
Introduction

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that primarily affects the liver, leading to inflammation and potential long-term complications such as cirrhosis, liver damage, or cancer. The hepatitis C virus (HCV) is usually transmitted through direct contact with infected blood. Some people may experience symptoms like jaundice, fatigue or nausea, but most have no symptoms, leading to many unaware they are infected. Currently, there is no vaccine, but antiviral medications can cure approximately 95% of cases.

Highlights

- Steady increase in Hepatitis C cases over the years, with occasional peaks indicating potential outbreaks or increased transmission.
- A dramatic rise in mortality rate from Hepatitis C observed in 2022, accelerating in 2023. The number of deaths was highest in November 2023 with 292 fatalities.
- Despite fluctuations in case numbers, there's a general uptrend in both cases and deaths, suggesting an escalating public health concern.
- The mortality-to-case ratio has surged recently, implying either higher virulence, delayed treatment, or issues with healthcare access or quality.

Temporal Trend



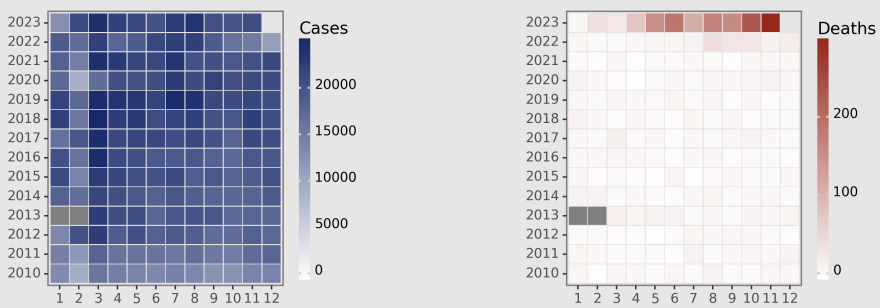
Cases Analysis

From 2010 to 2023, reported Hepatitis C cases in Chinese mainland show fluctuations with a general upward trend, spiking during March and July each year indicating possible seasonal patterns. The highest recorded cases occurred in March 2017 (24,076) and July 2019 (24,393). A noticeable, sustained increase in cases was observed from 2020 onwards, peaking in 2023. Data shows an incomplete record for January and February 2013. It's essential to investigate potential causes, high-risk periods, and preventative measures to mitigate these seasonal surges.

Deaths Analysis

Hepatitis C deaths remained relatively low and stable from 2010 to mid-2022, with slight increment over the years. Starting from August 2022, there was an alarming increase in mortality, culminating in a stark rise from May 2023 onwards, marking the highest fatalities in November 2023 (292). This dramatic increase in deaths warrants urgent public health attention to identify contributing factors, such as possible changes in virus virulence, healthcare access, or reporting practices, and to implement immediate healthcare interventions to reverse this trend.

Distribution



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