Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

Scarlet fever

November 2023

Introduction

Scarlet fever, also known as scarlatina, is an infectious disease caused by group A Streptococcus bacteria. Characterized by a distinctive rash, high fever, and sore throat, it largely affects children aged 5-15. Early signs often resemble strep throat. The rash – pink-red, sandpaper-like in texture – typically starts on the torso and spreads. Antibiotics are key to treatment, preventing complications like rheumatic heart disease. Despite its historic severity, modern antibiotic use has rendered it less dangerous today.

Highlights

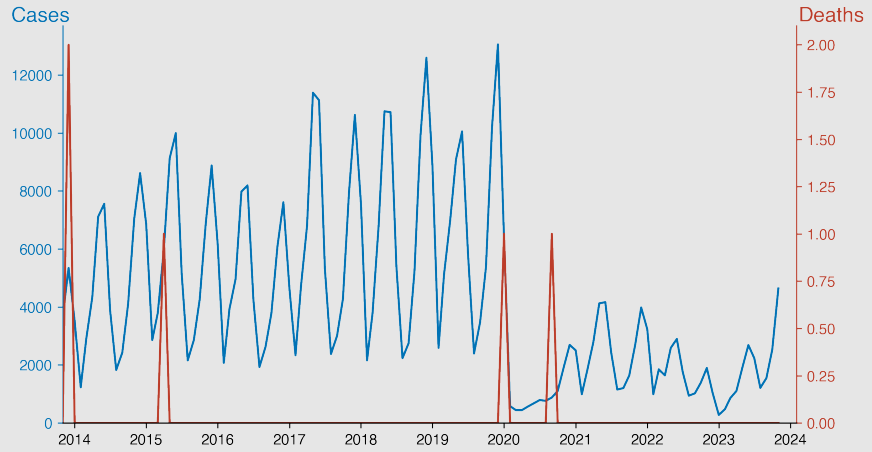
Scarlet Fever sees annual cyclical peaks, typically peaking in May to June, with a stark drop during February which correlates with Chinese New Year when many public services, including schools, are closed.

2. A substantial decrease in numbers was observed in 2020, possibly attributed to COVID-19 countermeasures or reduced reporting. Since then, cases have been gradually increasing but remain below pre-2020 levels.

3. Despite the fluctuating case count, the fatality rate remains extremely low, indicating effective treatment and response measures.

4. By November 2023, a significant surge was observed (4637 cases, no deaths), indicating a potential resurgence of Scarlet Fever in mainland China.

Temporal Trend



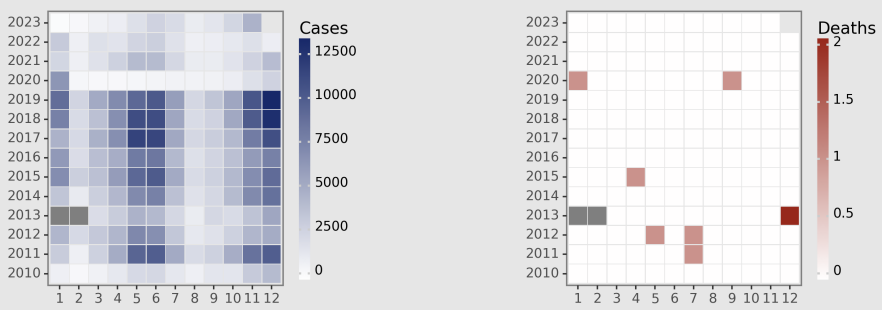
Cases Analysis

From 2010 to 2023, Scarlet fever cases in mainland China exhibited seasonality, peaking around June and significantly decreasing by early winter. There was a notable increase in cases from 2010 to 2018, reaching a maximum in December 2018 with 12,593 cases. However, a sharp decline was observed in 2020, likely influenced by heightened public health measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Cases began to recover in 2021 but remained lower than pre-2020 levels.

Deaths Analysis

The number of deaths due to Scarlet fever has remained remarkably low within the study period, with only six recorded instances - July 2011, May and July 2012, December 2013, April 2015, January 2020, and September 2020. While low, the sporadic deaths underscore the importance of vigilant public health strategies. It's also significant to note that no death has been reported since September 2020.

Distribution



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