Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Project

Influenza
November 2023

Introduction

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a highly contagious viral infection that primarily targets the respiratory system. It's caused by three types of influenza viruses: Type A, B, and C. Influenza is rampant globally, with outbreaks usually occuring in the winter months. Symptoms include fever, cough, malaise, sore throat, and muscle aches. In extreme cases, it can cause severe dehydration, pneumonia, or death. The virus spreads rapidly through the air via droplets from coughing or sneezing and direct contact with infected surfaces. Annual vaccinations are the primary preventative measure.
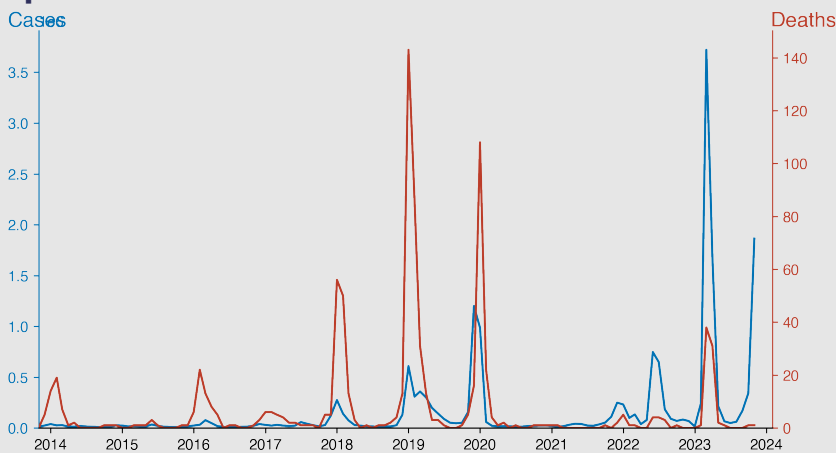
Highlights

- March 2023 recorded an unprecedented spike with 3,721,370 cases, the highest in the dataset, followed by a significant reduction in April to 1,677,011 cases.
- Despite the massive surge in cases, the fatality numbers stayed relatively low, with 38 deaths in March and 31 in April, indicating a low case-fatality ratio.
- Another substantial increase occurred in November 2023, reaching 1,862,998 cases, yet with only a single death reported, suggesting high transmission but lower virulence or improved case management.

Temporal Trend

Cases Analysis

The influenza cases in Chinese mainland from 2010 to 2023 displayed seasonal trends with peaks typically in December and January, reflecting the colder months. Starting from relative stability in the early years, there was a significant surge in reported cases starting in 2018, marking an elevated transmission period. Notably, a massive spike was observed in December 2019 and March 2023, indicating potential outbreaks. Data gaps are present for early 2013, making trend analysis incomplete for that year.

Deaths Analysis

Despite the escalated number of influenza cases over the years, the death rate remained relatively low, suggesting either a non-lethal strain predominance or effective healthcare response. The fatality counts peaked sharply in January 2019 and again in January 2020, which could correlate with the intensity of flu seasons or concurrent health events. Following 2020, there was a notable decline in deaths even when case numbers were high, possibly due to advances in medical treatment or heightened public health intervention.

Distribution
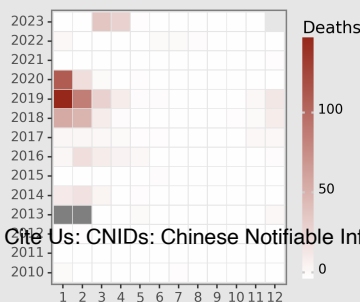
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Version: 2024-01-05 (UTC+)

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