

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

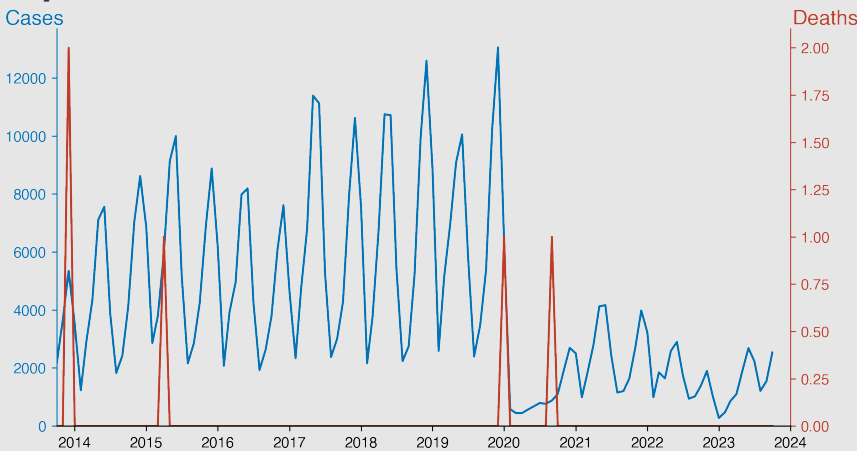
Scarlet fever

October 2023

Introduction

Scarlet fever is an infectious disease caused by group A *Streptococcus* bacteria, the same organism responsible for strep throat. Characterized by a bright red rash that feels like sandpaper, it typically affects children aged 5 to 15. Key symptoms include a high fever, sore throat, and bright red tongue (often described as "strawberry tongue"), along with the rash developing within one to two days of infection. While once considered a serious childhood illness, it's now treatable with antibiotics and has become less common and less severe with improved medical care.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

A notable decline is seen in the number of Scarlet fever cases in 2020, likely due to public health measures for COVID-19.

- After 2020, there is a gradual return to pre-2020 case levels, with fluctuations within the expected seasonal pattern, peaking around May to July.
- No deaths have been reported from Scarlet fever in October 2023, which suggests effective clinical management and infection control.
- The peak in 2019 before the drop in 2020 suggests a pre-pandemic escalation, after which incidence rates are stabilizing without reaching the same heights.

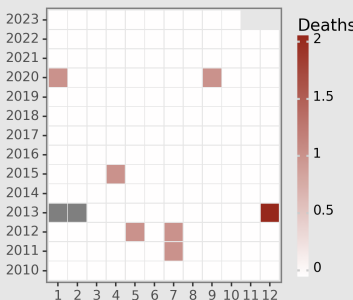
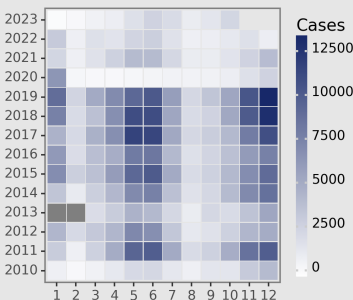
Cases Analysis

Scarlet fever cases in mainland China exhibit a pronounced seasonality, with a recurrent upsurge from May to July, aligning with the warmer and more humid climate that may favor the transmission of *Streptococcus pyogenes*. A decadal trend reveals an increase from 2010 to 2019, peaking annually with over 10,000 cases by mid-decade. However, a stark decrease is observed starting 2020, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic onset, potentially due to public health interventions like social distancing and heightened hygiene practices. By 2023, there seems to be a gradual resurgence of cases, yet numbers have not rebounded to the pre-pandemic level.

Deaths Analysis

Scarlet fever fatalities in mainland China are rare, with only four recorded deaths from 2010 to 2023, amidst tens of thousands of cases, indicating a low case-fatality rate. The isolated deaths in 2011, 2012, 2015, and 2020 illustrate the usual effective management and treatment of the infection with antibiotics. The lack of fatalities despite the high incidence rate may also reflect improved healthcare access, public awareness, and possibly under-reporting. Continuous monitoring is essential, particularly with the slight increase in cases post-2020.

Distribution



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Version: 2023-12-24 (UTC+)

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