

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Project

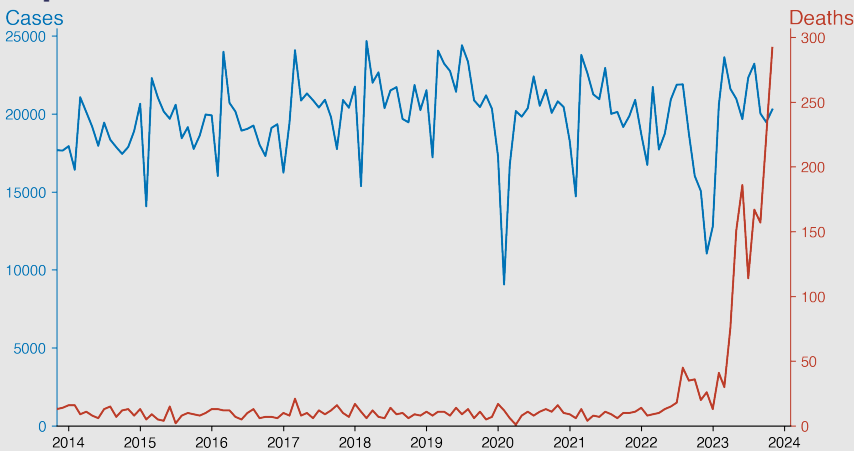
Hepatitis C

November 2023

Introduction

Hepatitis C is a viral infection primarily affecting the liver. The Hepatitis C Virus (HCV), which is primarily bloodborne, causes it. This condition can range from a mild illness lasting only a few weeks (acute), to a serious, lifelong illness (chronic) that can lead to liver damage, cirrhosis, liver cancer, or even liver failure. Most people with chronic Hepatitis C are asymptomatic. However, chronic infection can be curable with antiviral medicines. It is a major global health problem, with millions of people infected worldwide.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- A sharp increase in Hepatitis C fatalities has been noted from 2022 to 2023, with deaths rising from 26 in December 2022 to 292 in November 2023, despite cases remaining relatively stable.
- The peak of cases was in March 2018 (24,666 cases), while the highest mortality was in November 2023 (292 deaths), pointing to a recent spike in lethality.
- From August 2022, a significant uptick in death rates suggests potential changes in disease behavior or health system issues.
- The trend does not show a steady decline in Hepatitis C incidence, highlighting ongoing public health challenges.

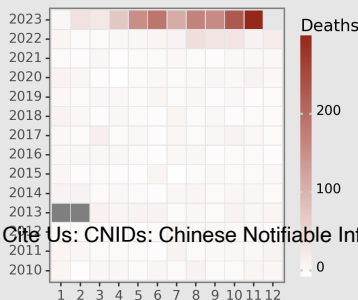
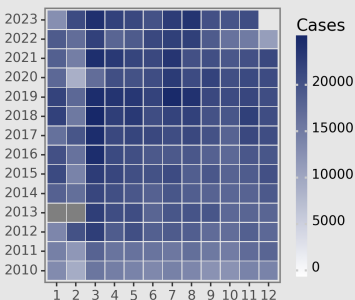
Cases Analysis

Over the years 2010-2023, Hepatitis C cases in Chinese mainland displayed variability, with a general trend of increase. Initial numbers hovered around 13,000-15,000 cases per month in 2010, rising significantly to a peak of 24,666 in March 2018. A sharp drop to 9,068 cases occurred in February 2020, potentially indicating reporting differences during the COVID-19 pandemic onset. Recent data suggests a resurgence in cases with numbers consistently above 20,000 since January 2021, barring a few months.

Deaths Analysis

Hepatitis C mortality in Chinese mainland remained relatively low from 2010 to early 2022, with monthly deaths rarely exceeding 20. However, a stark increase began in August 2022 with deaths skyrocketing to 45, and a continuing upward trend reaching 292 in November 2023. This recent surge in fatalities, despite a relatively stable case count, may indicate changes in viral virulence, access to care, changes in case management, or population vulnerability possibly exacerbated by concurrent health crises such as COVID-19.

Distribution



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