

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

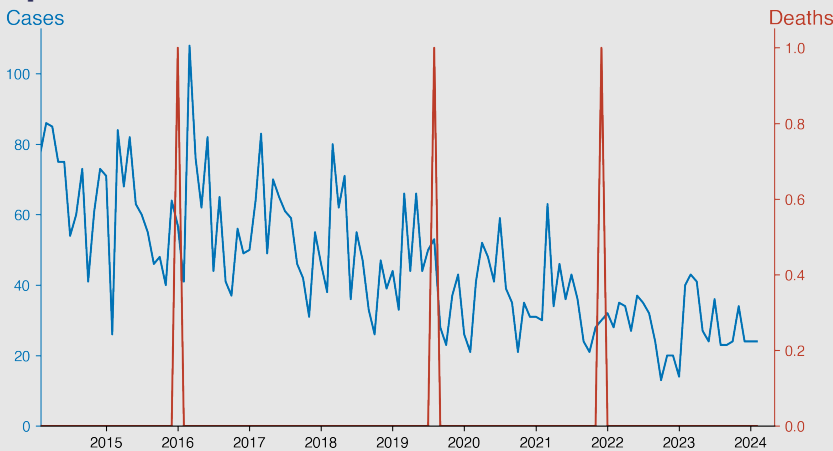
Leprosy

February 2024

Introduction

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*. It primarily affects the skin, nerves, and mucous membranes and is characterized by skin lesions and progressive neurological damage. Leprosy is curable with a course of multidrug therapy, is not highly infectious, and transmission likely involves close and frequent contacts with untreated cases. Despite being one of the oldest diseases known to humanity, leprosy remains a concern in some countries, necessitating continued public health efforts for early diagnosis and treatment to prevent disabilities and transmission.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- There has been a declining trend in the number of new leprosy cases reported monthly in the Chinese mainland from 2014 to 2024, indicating success of control measures.
- Despite the occasional spike, the average monthly case count drops from 70 in 2014 to 24 in 2024, suggesting effective progress in disease reduction.
- Leprosy-related deaths are extremely infrequent, with only three instances reported over the ten-year period (2016, 2019, 2021), suggesting that the disease is generally well-managed.
- As of February 2024, there were 24 newly reported cases, consistent with the reduced case rates observed in recent years, and no leprosy-related deaths.

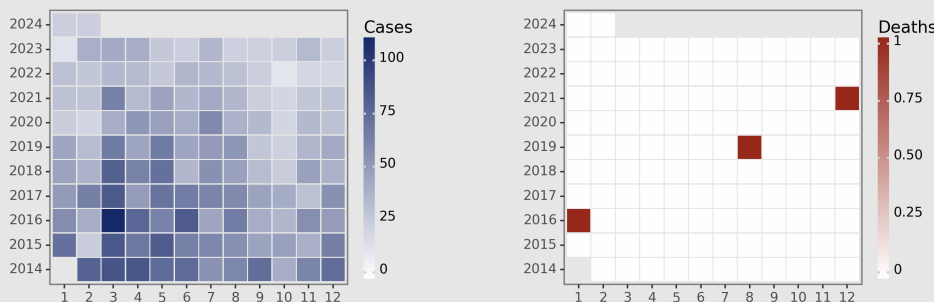
Cases Analysis

Over the 10-year period from 2014 to 2024, there is evidence of an overall downward trend in the number of reported cases of leprosy in mainland China. The highest number of cases was reported in March 2016, with 108 cases. Afterward, the reported cases decreased progressively, with a few exceptions. By 2024, the average monthly case count reduced to the mid-20s, indicating a substantial drop over the decade. The cyclical pattern suggests epidemic peaks during the early months of the year, followed by lower case numbers towards the year-end.

Deaths Analysis

The leprosy death toll in Chinese mainland over the reported period is notably low, with only two registered deaths despite several years of case reports. The first recorded death occurred in January 2016, followed by another isolated incident in December 2021. Given the prolonged periods without fatalities and consistent case reporting, this indicates effective clinical management and treatment of leprosy cases. The rare incidence of deaths underscores the relative success in mortality reduction related to leprosy in the region.

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