

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

Scarlet fever

November 2023

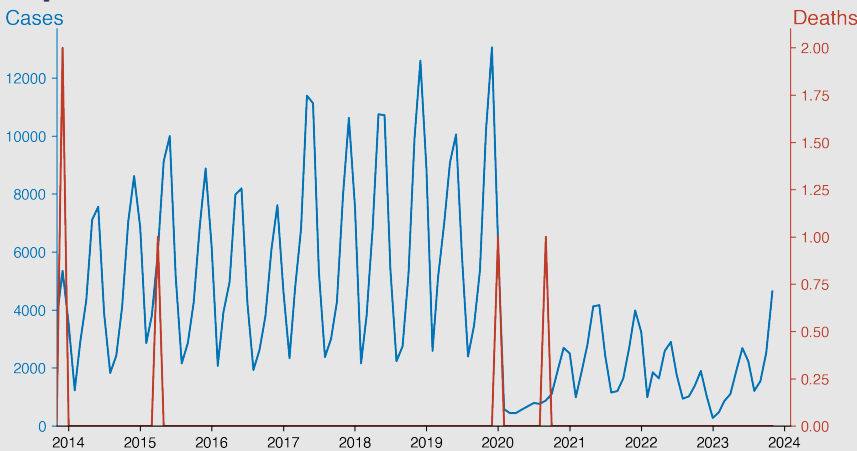
Introduction

Scarlet fever, also known as scarlatina, is a contagious bacterial illness primarily affecting children. It is characterized by a distinctive red rash, high fever, sore throat, swollen glands, and a 'strawberry' tongue. The disease is caused by group A *Streptococcus* bacteria, the same bacteria that cause strep throat. Scarlet fever was once a severe childhood disease, but antibiotic treatments now make it manageable if promptly diagnosed. Vaccines are not available for scarlet fever, which generally spreads via saliva droplets.

Highlights

- A marked seasonal trend is evident, with the number of scarlet fever cases peaking during the warmest months, typically from May to August, and reaching the lowest points in winter.
- The data reflects a notable reduction in cases following 2019, with 2020 observing an unprecedented drop, possibly due to stringent public health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- From 2021 onwards, there has been a gradual uptick in cases, though the numbers have not returned to pre-pandemic levels, suggesting a degree of sustained control or change in transmission dynamics.
- While occasional deaths occurred, scarlet fever largely remains a non-fatal disease in the Chinese mainland population, as indicated by the low mortality throughout the years.

Temporal Trend



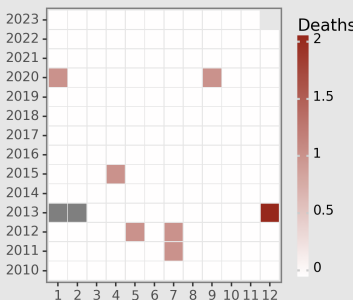
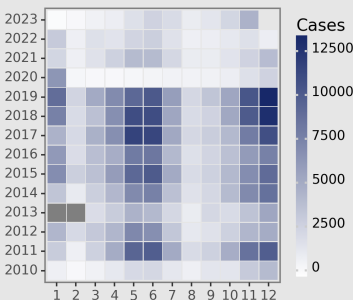
Cases Analysis

Scarlet fever cases in the Chinese mainland display seasonality with peaks during May and June, as evidenced by the highest numbers consistently reported in these months across several years. The data reveals an increasing trend from 2010 to 2019, with a notable spike in cases in the latter year. However, there was a significant decline in cases beginning in 2020, potentially attributable to heightened public health measures amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This trend of decreased cases continues into 2023, though monitoring for any resurgence remains essential.

Deaths Analysis

Scarlet fever mortality in the Chinese mainland has been extremely low despite fluctuations in case numbers. Over 13 years, only 5 deaths have been reported, with the first recorded in July 2011. Subsequent deaths occurred sporadically in 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2020, signifying a very low case-fatality ratio. The data could suggest effective management and treatment protocols for scarlet fever in the Chinese mainland; nonetheless, continued vigilance and access to medical care are crucial in maintaining this low mortality rate.

Distribution



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