

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

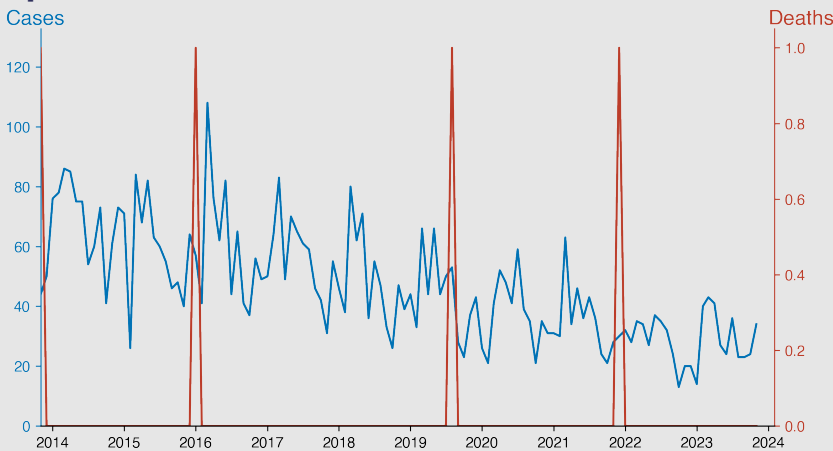
Leprosy

November 2023

Introduction

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. It primarily affects the body's skin and peripheral nerves, but can also impact the respiratory system and the eyes. Transmission is believed to occur through droplets from the nose and mouth during close and frequent contact with untreated cases. Leprosy is characterized by sores, lumps, or skin discolouration that do not fade after weeks or months. If left untreated, it can lead to muscle weakness, numbness, and permanent disabilities. Early diagnosis and treatment can prevent disability.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- Initial data shows a fluctuating trend but generally high prevalence of leprosy cases in the early years (2010-2012), with peaks often exceeding 100 cases per month. Mortality was low but present.
- A marked decrease in both cases and deaths is noticeable from 2012 onward; cases rarely exceed 50 per month in more recent years (2020-2023), showing a significant reduction in incidence. Deaths have become very rare or non-existent.
- Since 2020, the number of cases has remained relatively stable at a lower level, indicating consistent control measures and surveillance efforts, leading to fewer outbreaks or transmission events.
- As of November 2023, the number of leprosy cases remains low (34 cases), with no reported deaths, suggesting that the disease is being effectively managed in the Chinese mainland, albeit not eliminated.

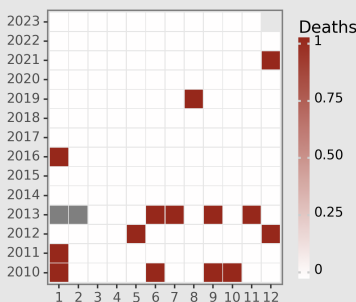
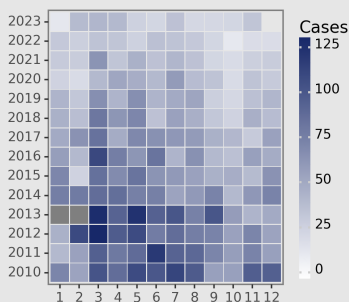
Cases Analysis

Leprosy cases in Chinese mainland exhibit seasonal fluctuations with case counts often peaking during March, May, and June over multiple years, suggesting possible seasonal factors affecting transmission or diagnosis rates. The years 2010 and 2011 had higher numbers of cases with March 2012 and March 2013 being particularly notable. However, from 2014 onwards, there's a gradual decline in cases, with the lowest numbers observed from late 2018 through 2023. There is a general downward trend in leprosy incidence, potentially due to improved public health measures, increased awareness, and better treatment programs.

Deaths Analysis

Death occurrences due to leprosy are extremely rare, with a total of 10 reported deaths over the evaluated period, signaling an extremely low case-fatality rate. Deaths do not share a clear pattern or trend over the months and years. This suggests effective management of the disease in China, considering the consistent low mortality despite the initial higher incidence rates. Additionally, the decrease in cases over time did not proportionally affect the number of deaths, indicating that the severity of the cases might not have lessened, but the overall health response has remained robust.

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