

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

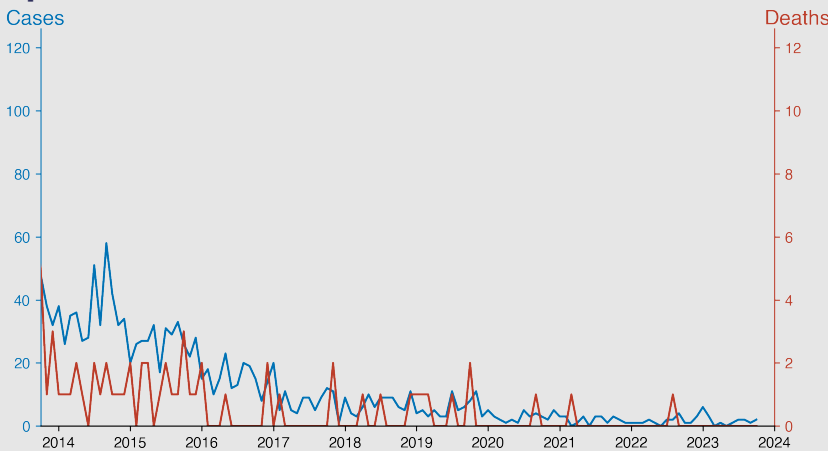
Neonatal tetanus

October 2023

Introduction

Neonatal tetanus is a form of bacterial infection that affects newborns, typically caused by *Clostridium tetani*. It generally arises when the unhealed umbilical stump, particularly in settings where aseptic techniques are not observed during and after delivery, is contaminated. Characterized by muscle stiffness and spasms, lockjaw, and difficulty swallowing, the condition can be fatal if not treated promptly. Neonatal tetanus mostly occurs in lower-income countries with limited access to immunization and healthcare services. Maternal vaccination with the tetanus toxoid is highly effective at preventing this serious disease.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

Significant decline in neonatal tetanus cases and deaths from 2010 to 2023, showing effective control measures.

- The highest number of reported cases (120) occurred in September and October 2010, with decreases to single digits by 2020.

- From January 2021, the reported cases remained low, typically fewer than 5 per month, and notably zero deaths since March 2021.

- As of October 2023, the situation is stable with very few cases (2) and no reported deaths, indicating sustained control of the disease.

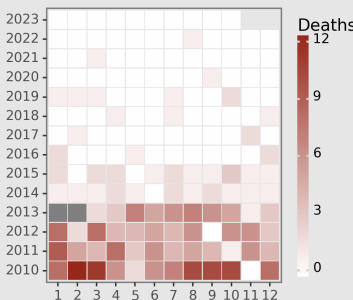
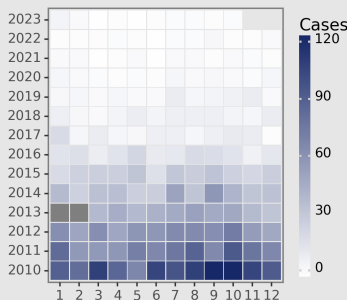
Cases Analysis

From January 2010 to October 2023, neonatal tetanus cases in mainland China displayed a marked decrease. Initially, monthly cases averaged around 89 to 120 in 2010. The following years witnessed a general downward trend, with occasional spikes. By 2020-2023, the reported cases significantly diminished to single digits, averaging at or below six cases per month. This trend suggests the successful impact of immunization and improved maternal and neonatal healthcare practices over the years, which are crucial in preventing this bacterial disease.

Deaths Analysis

Neonatal tetanus deaths in mainland China followed a declining pattern similar to case numbers from January 2010 to October 2023. In 2010, monthly deaths ranged from 2 to 12 cases, indicating a non-negligible fatality rate given the number of cases. The ensuing years saw a palpable reduction, with deaths often falling to zero from 2016 onwards. The data reflects the efficacy of preventative measures, likely including increased vaccination coverage for mothers and better sterile procedures during childbirth, which contributed to the near-elimination of neonatal tetanus-related fatalities.

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