

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

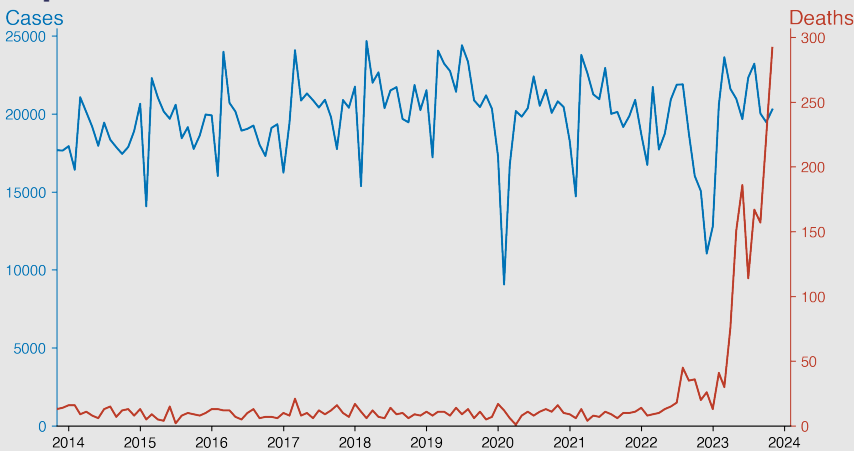
Hepatitis C

November 2023

Introduction

Hepatitis C is a viral infection that causes liver inflammation, possibly leading to severe liver damage. The hepatitis C virus (HCV) is spread through contaminated blood, often via intravenous drug use, unsafe injection practices, or inadequate sterilization of medical equipment. Often asymptomatic in its early stages, chronic Hepatitis C can eventually lead to conditions such as cirrhosis, liver cancer, or liver failure. Despite these risks, advancements in antiviral medications have dramatically improved the prognosis and cure rates for this disease.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

Noticeable increase in deaths despite decline in cases: Although there has been a slight decline in Hepatitis C cases in mainland China through 2023, an alarming increase in the number of deaths is recorded due to the disease.

2. Highest death month: In November 2023, the highest number of deaths (292) is recorded, which is unprecedented compared to previous years' data.

3. High disease burden: Despite small fluctuations in case numbers, Hepatitis C continues to pose a high burden, which is indicative of the persistent nature of the virus and the challenge to disease control.

4. Unpredictable death rate: The escalating and unsteady death rate over recent months indicates an urgent need to enhance disease management and preventive strategies.

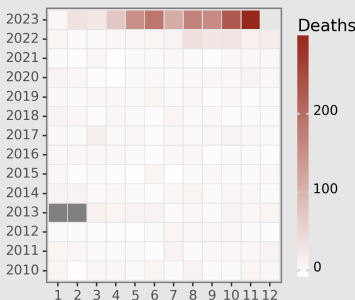
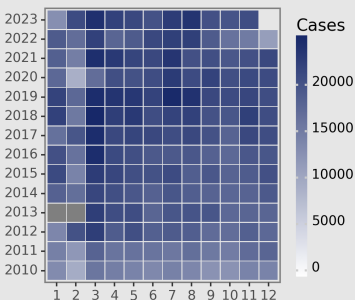
Cases Analysis

Hepatitis C cases in mainland China have shown an overall increasing trend from 2010 to 2023 with periodic fluctuations peaking in 2016, 2019, and 2017 consecutively (approximately 24k cases each time). Despite a substantial decline in 2020 presumably due to healthcare resource allocation amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the numbers rebounded in 2021. Interestingly, a significant rise was seen in February 2023 and remained constantly high afterward. This could be due to various factors including improved diagnostic testing, increased public awareness leading to more individuals getting tested, or even a potential outbreak.

Deaths Analysis

The number of deaths due to Hepatitis C from 2010 to 2021 had no specific trend and remained relatively low (<20 deaths per month). However, an alarming spike became evident: from August 2022, deaths rose significantly, culminating in a peak of 292 deaths in November 2023. This vertiginous increase might suggest that the healthcare system is struggling to provide adequate care or it could indicate a much more aggressive strain of the virus. In-depth analysis of public health strategies, access to antivirals, and genetic sequencing reports of the virus is imperative.

Distribution



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