

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Project

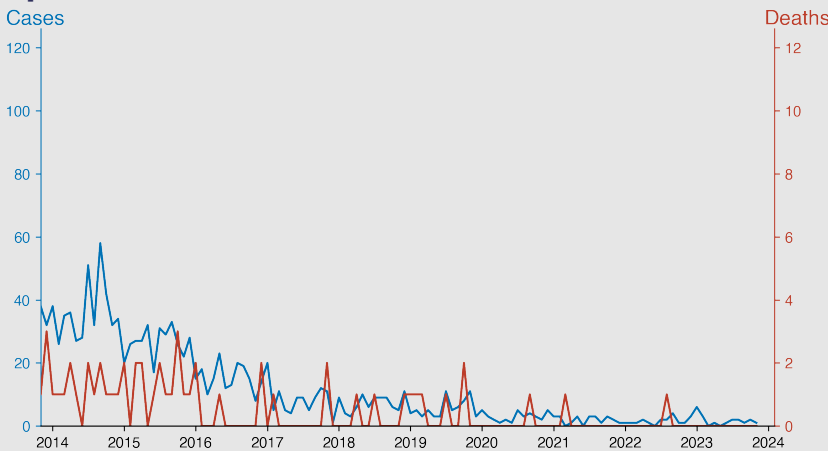
Neonatal tetanus

November 2023

Introduction

Neonatal tetanus is a severe bacterial infection primarily affecting infants in under-resourced countries. The causative agent, *Clostridium tetani*, enters through the umbilical stump during unhygienic childbirth practices. Symptoms, appearing within the first two weeks of life, include muscle stiffness and spasms. Without quick intervention, it can cause breathing difficulties and mortality rates are high. Despite being preventable through simple hygiene practices and maternal vaccination, neonatal tetanus remains a significant global health challenge.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- Significant decline in neonatal tetanus cases and deaths from 2010 to 2023, indicating successful disease control efforts.
- From a high of 120 cases in September and October of 2010, cases have dropped to consistently low single digits after 2022.
- The death toll has also seen a marked decrease, with no deaths reported in several months throughout the observed years, particularly after 2020.
- The data up to November 2023 show very low disease activity, with only 1 case and no deaths, suggesting neonatal tetanus is being effectively managed in the Chinese mainland.

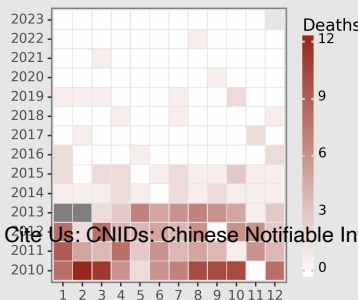
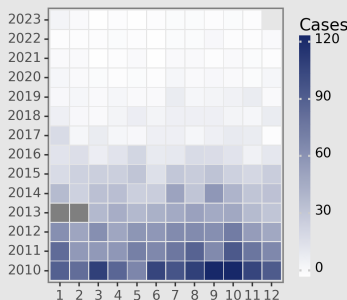
Cases Analysis

From 2010 to 2023, neonatal tetanus cases in Chinese mainland displayed a significant decreasing trend. Starting at 89 cases in January 2010, the numbers fluctuated initially but showed a gradual decline over the years. Particularly from 2016 onwards, there was a marked reduction, with cases often falling to single digits. This could indicate improved vaccination coverage, better access to antenatal care, and increased birth deliveries under hygienic conditions, reflecting the success of targeted public health interventions and educational campaigns.

Deaths Analysis

The number of neonatal tetanus deaths also followed a downward trend paralleling the decrease in cases on the Chinese mainland from 2010 to 2023. Initially, deaths ranged from 2 to 12 per month, but from 2016 onwards, mortality typically remained at zero or occasionally rose to a maximum of 2 deaths. This drop in fatalities could be attributed to enhanced healthcare systems, rapid treatment, and immunization programs. Continued vigilance is necessary to maintain gains and achieve elimination status as per WHO standards.

Distribution



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