Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report
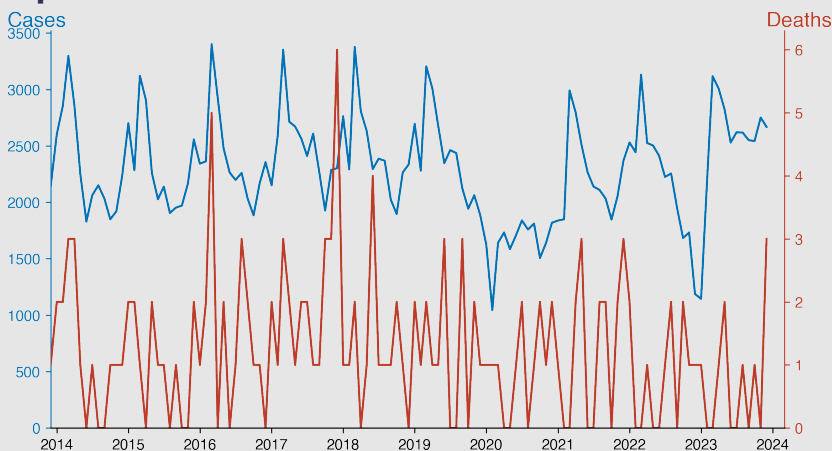
Hepatitis E
December 2023

Introduction

Hepatitis E is a liver disease caused by the Hepatitis E virus (HEV). This waterborne disease is usually acquired through the consumption of contaminated water or food. A significant global health concern, particularly in East and South Asia, it frequently manifests as an epidemic. Hepatitis E typically resolves itself within 4-6 weeks with only minor complications, however, severe cases, especially among pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems, can lead to acute liver failure. There's currently no specific treatment for Hepatitis E, making prevention via improved sanitation and safe water significant in combating this illness.

Temporal Trend

Highlights

- Hepatitis E cases in China show a seasonal peak in spring, with the highest counts often in March and April, indicating possible seasonality influences.
- A significant case reduction in February 2020 aligns with COVID-19 responses, hinting at the impact of public health measures on Hepatitis E transmission.
- Post-2020, monthly cases stabilize at approximately 2000-3000, showing a relative consistency through to December 2023.
- Deaths remain low, with monthly fatalities generally not exceeding two, reflecting a stable case-fatality rate over the observed timeframe.
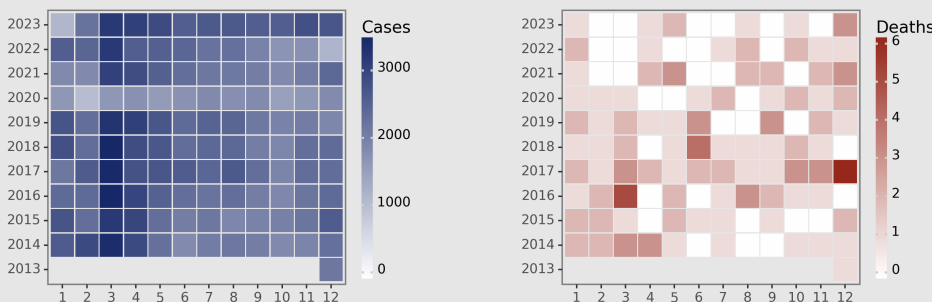
Cases Analysis

Hepatitis E cases in Mainland China show variable trends across the observed years. A notable peak occurs annually, typically in March, with the highest incidence of 3401 cases in March 2016. While there's a general decline in cases starting in 2020, corresponding with the COVID-19 pandemic onset and possibly due to public health measures, cases rebound by 2023. There's a consistent increase in cases toward the year's end from September to December, indicating seasonality in transmission or reporting.

Deaths Analysis

The mortality from Hepatitis E in Mainland China remains consistently low, with most months recording one to three deaths. The highest mortality within the dataset occurred in December 2017, with six deaths. There is no clear trend in the occurrence of deaths over the years, and mortality does not seem to correlate strongly with the incidence of cases. A significant drop in mortality is observed in 2020, continuing until 2023, potentially reflecting heightened healthcare vigilance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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