Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report
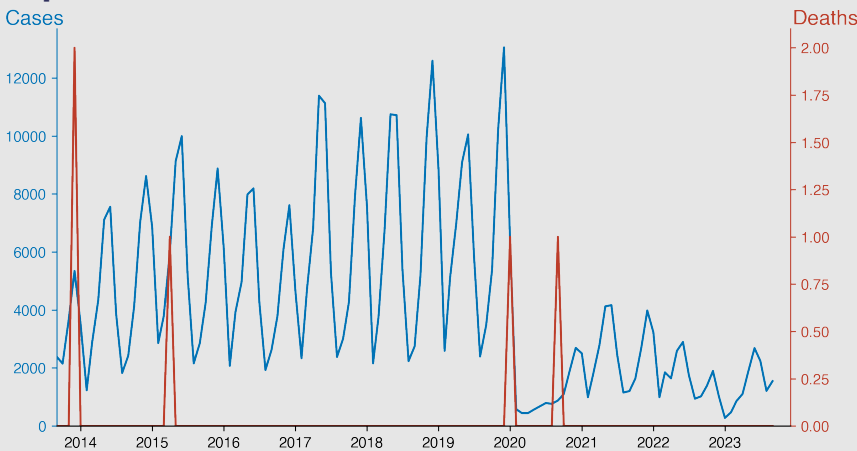
Scarlet fever
September 2023

Introduction

Scarlet fever is an infectious disease caused by a strain of group A streptococcus bacteria, the same that causes strep throat. Primarily affecting children, it is characterized by a bright red rash on the body, often accompanied by a high fever and sore throat. The rash, which feels like sandpaper to the touch, typically begins on the chest and spreads to other body parts. Other symptoms may include a red, bumpy tongue (strawberry tongue) and flushed face. Scarlet fever is treatable with antibiotics, and early treatment is crucial to prevent complications.

Temporal Trend

Highlights

Seasonal Patterns: Scarlet fever in China shows strong seasonal patterns, with higher caseloads from April to June and November to January with peak caseloads most often occurring in June and December.

2. Long-Term Trend: The long-term trend shows a significant decrease in cases after 2018, dropping from an average of 4990 cases per month (2010 to 2018) to an average of 1160 cases per month (2019 to 2023).

3. Mortality Rates: The mortality rate is generally low, with few recorded deaths throughout the recorded period.

4. Current Status: As of September 2023, scarlet fever shows a slight increase from the previous month, however, overall the numbers remain lower in comparison to the earlier years.
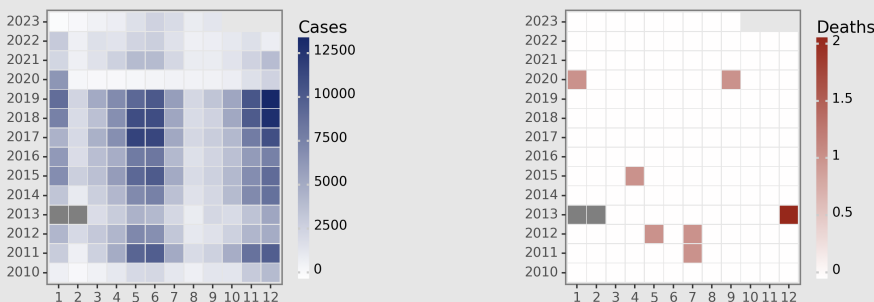
Cases Analysis

Scarlet fever cases in mainland China appear to have a seasonal pattern, with the highest reported cases generally occurring around the months of May, June, and December. The period between 2010 and 2018 shows a significant increase in cases each year, reaching a peak in 2018. However, a dramatic decline in cases is seen in 2020, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent implementation of restrictive measures. Nonetheless, there was a gradual increase in cases observed since the start of 2021, although the numbers are still relatively lower compared to the pre-pandemic years.

Deaths Analysis

Overall, Scarlet fever has a very low mortality rate in mainland China. Throughout the entire recorded period, only a total of 5 deaths were reported, despite the large number of cases. These deaths occurred in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, and 2020. It's important to note, however, that despite its low mortality rate, Scarlet fever can cause severe complications if not treated properly and promptly. Despite the drop in cases in 2020, the disease continues to circulate and remain a potential public health concern.

Distribution

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