

Chinese Notifiable Infectious Diseases Surveillance Report

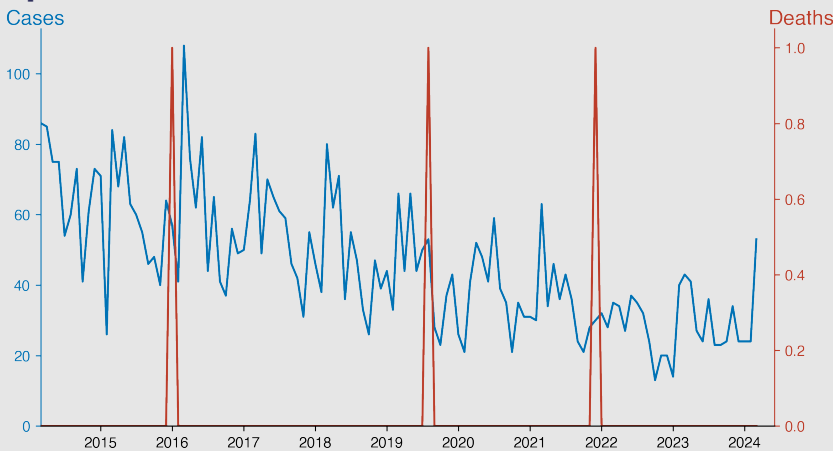
Leprosy

March 2024

Introduction

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae* bacteria. It primarily affects the skin, peripheral nerves, mucosal surfaces of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes, leading to potential injury and disability. Leprosy is characterized by long incubation periods, usually about five years but it can range up to 20 years. Despite its alarming symptoms, leprosy can be effectively treated with a multi-drug therapy. However, if left untreated, the disease can cause severe nerve damage and disability.

Temporal Trend



Highlights

- Declining trend in cases: Leprosy cases have generally declined from 86 in March 2014 to 53 in March 2024.
- Seasonal pattern: Lower case counts are typically reported in winter months (November to February).
- Few fatalities: From 2014 to 2024, only two reported deaths occurred due to Leprosy, indicating high survival rates.
- Current Leprosy status: As of March 2024, 53 cases reported, no fatalities, suggesting managed prevalence of the disease in mainland China.

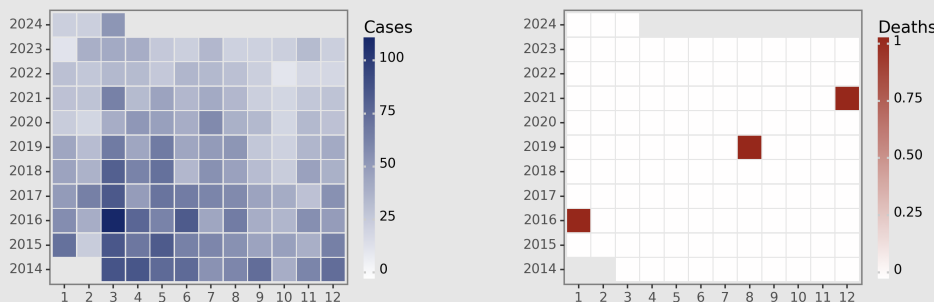
Cases Analysis

Over the past decade (2014-2024), leprosy cases in Mainland China showed a general decline. Cases started high with a maximum of 108 cases (March 2016) and consistently decreased ever since. By 2024, cases fell to as low as 24. However, periods of slight increases, particularly during March of each year, indicate the possible seasonality of the disease. Despite these occasional rises, the overall downward trajectory suggests improved disease management, increased awareness, and better screening methods over the years.

Deaths Analysis

Despite the consistent presence of leprosy cases, mainland China's death rate from the disease has remained extraordinarily low. Within the ten-year period between 2014 and 2024, only three deaths were reported — in January 2016, August 2019, and December 2021. This could be attributed to early detection, effective treatment protocols, public health campaigns increasing disease awareness, and ensuring patients receive necessary care. However, continuous surveillance and preventive measures are essential to maintain this low mortality rate.

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