Letter to the editor in response to ‘Seasonality of the transmissibility of hand, foot and mouth disease: a modelling study in Xiamen City, China’

Zehong Huang1,*, Mingzhai Wang2,*, Luxia Qiu1,*, Ning Wang3, Zeyu Zhao1, Jia Rui1, Yao Wang3, Xinchun Liu1, Mikah Ngwanguong Hannah4, Benhua Zhao3, Yanhua Su1, Bin Zhao5 and Tianmu Chen1

1State Key Laboratory of Molecular Vaccinology and Molecular Diagnostics, School of Public Health, Xiamen University, Fujian, People’s Republic of China; 2Xiamen Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Xiamen City, Fujian Province, People’s Republic of China; 3Respiratory Department, Shanghai General Hospital, Shanghai, People’s Republic of China; 4Medical College, Xiamen University, Xiamen City, Fujian Province, People’s Republic of China and 5State Key Laboratory of Molecular Vaccinology and Molecular Diagnostics, Laboratory Department, Xiang’an Hospital of Xiamen University, Xiamen, Fujian, People’s Republic of China

We reviewed with interest Zhao’s letter regarding our article exploring the approach of calculating the effective reproduction number ($R_{eff}$) [1]. We entirely agree with Zhao et al. that it is essential to calculate the $R_{eff}$ by using the next generation matrix (NGM) approach. Actually, we also commonly used the NGM approach to calculate the reproduction number of other infectious diseases [2].

We did not provide the complex equation of $R_{eff}$ from the NGM approach instead of a simplified equation in our study [1], because in Xiamen City, the values of $f$, daily $br$ and daily $dr$ were 0.0003 (0.03%), $2.46 \times 10^{-5}$ and $1.24 \times 10^{-5}$, respectively, which were much lower than those of $\omega$ (1/5), $\gamma$ (1/14) and $\gamma'$ (1/21), respectively. We also calculated the values of $R_{eff}$ by using the simplified equation we used and the two equations provided by Zhao et al., and we found that they were almost the same (Fig. 1).

Therefore, we agree to use an accurate approach to estimate the transmissibility of an infectious disease. However, a simplified equation would be easier to be performed by the primary public health department than a complex one.

![Fig. 1. The values of $R_{eff}$ calculated by three equations in Xiamen City, 2014–2018.](https://doi.org/10.1017/S095026882000059X)

References

1. Huang Z et al. (2019) Seasonality of the transmissibility of hand, foot and mouth disease: a modelling study in Xiamen City, China. Epidemiology and Infection 147, e327.