COMPLEX DYNAMICS OF A SIMPLE EPIDEMIC MODEL WITH A NONLINEAR INCIDENCE

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Abstract. A simple epidemic model with a nonlinear incidence rate and two compartments is studied. The backward bifurcation is described and the corresponding threshold is calculated. The Hopf bifurcation and Bogdanov-Takens bifurcation are analyzed and numerical evidences for the stable or unstable limit cycle are provided.

1. Introduction. The importance of the so-called basic reproductive number, $R_0$, has been well recognized in the theoretical study of disease spread. In particular, for many deterministic models, $R_0$ classifies the long-term progression of the disease under consideration. Namely, if $R_0 < 1$, then the disease-free equilibrium is globally stable; if $R_0 > 1$, then a unique endemic equilibrium appears and this endemic equilibrium is globally stable.

However, there are increasing evidences indicating that $R_0$ alone cannot fully determine the global dynamics of the disease transmission. Indeed, backward and/or Hopf bifurcations can happen [6, 7, 15, 11, 9, 10, 14, 13, 12, 16, 17, 19] and the Bogdanov-Takens singularity may occur [18]. These complicated dynamics can be the consequence of non-standard incidence rates [3, 13, 16, 17]. Multiple equilibria and periodic solutions are shown to exist in [13, 16, 17], and multiple limit cycles are observed in [18] for a simple SI-model with the incidence rate $\frac{\beta IS}{1+\alpha I}$ (with parameters $k, \alpha > 0$).

In this paper, we consider a simple SI-epidemic model with a constant recruitment rate and the incidence rate $\beta(1+\epsilon I)IS$ suggested in [19, 5, 4]. We show that this simple model can exhibit very complicated dynamical behaviors. First

2000 Mathematics Subject Classification. Primary: 92D30, 34K20; Secondary: 34K25.

Key words and phrases. Epidemic model, nonlinear incidence rate, backward bifurcation, limit cycle.

This study was supported by China Ministry of Science and Technology (2004BA719A01), by Canada Research Chairs Program, by Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and by Mathematics for Information Technology and Complex Systems.