



Price Control on Cardiac Stents

What is the issue?

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- In India, emergency angioplasty was carried out in less than 10% of patients mainly because of the cost involved in the procedure and the lack of access to stents.
- So, in February 2017, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority slashed prices of stents by up to 85%.

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What is a Stent?

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- Stents are tiny metal tubes coated with medication, which are **inserted into clogged arteries** to keep them flowing well.
- The devices save thousands of lives globally, every year.
- Emergency angioplasty is the treatment of choice during an acute heart attack, wherein the clot is crushed with a balloon and a stent is placed.
- It improves the chance of the patient surviving by almost 30% when compared to clot dissolving medication.
- So, bringing the devices under price control was necessary to enable more patients to make use of this procedure.

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What are the problems?

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- Senior cardiologists have noticed a **disturbing increase in multi-vessel stenting**.

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- With cheaper stents and a fall in procedure costs, many more patients are opting for angioplasty.

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- Another issue is the **availability** of latest generation stents.

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- Major international stent companies had filed for withdrawing their latest products from the Indian market.

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- If this happens, newer and innovative stent technology will never be introduced in India.

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- Research on **indigenous stents** has become a victim of the government's plan.

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- With prices of imported stents and Indian stents now being the same, doctors and patients could prefer the imported devices.

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- If the situation continues, the financial viability of Indian stent manufacturers could be hit.

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- Also, in India, before innovating, manufacturing and marketing a stent, a company has to go through several **regulatory hurdles**.

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- This will have a bearing on their capacity to do quality research.

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- Ultimately, lack of indigenous research and development will make the country **dependent on imported stents**.

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- Medical tourism also will be hit as it will become apparent that Indian hospitals do not have the latest generation stents.

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What could be done?

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- There must be a system to make sure that the latest medical devices, including stents, are priced differently.

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- All aspects involving medical device development must be fast-tracked and should be as **transparent** as possible.

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- The government must **support Indian stent manufacturers** and medical device research so that we don't have to depend on imported stents.

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Source: The Indian Express

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