Price Control on Cardiac Stents

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- 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.
\n
- So, in February 2017, the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority slashed prices of stents by up to 85%.
\n

\n\n

What is a Stent?

\n\n

\n
- Stents are tiny metal tubes coated with medication, which are **inserted into clogged arteries** to keep them flowing well.
\n
- The devices save thousands of lives globally, every year.
\n
- 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.
\n
- It improves the chance of the patient surviving by almost 30% when compared to clot dissolving medication.
\n
- So, bringing the devices under price control was necessary to enable more patients to make use of this procedure.
\n

\n\n

What are the problems?

\n\n

\n

- Senior cardiologists have noticed a **disturbing increase in multi-vessel stenting.**
  \n
- With cheaper stents and a fall in procedure costs, many more patients are opting for angioplasty.
  \n
- Another issue is the **availability** of latest generation stents.
  \n
- Major international stent companies had filed for withdrawing their latest products from the Indian market.
  \n
- If this happens, newer and innovative stent technology will never be introduced in India.
  \n
- Research on **indigenous stents** has become a victim of the government's plan.
  \n
- With prices of imported stents and Indian stents now being the same, doctors and patients could prefer the imported devices.
  \n
- If the situation continues, the financial viability of Indian stent manufacturers could be hit.
  \n
- Also, in India, before innovating, manufacturing and marketing a stent, a company has to go through several **regulatory hurdles**.
  \n
- This will have a bearing on their capacity to do quality research.
  \n
- Ultimately, lack of indigenous research and development will make the country **dependent on imported stents.**
  \n
- Medical tourism also will be hit as it will become apparent that Indian hospitals do not have the latest generation stents.
  \n

\n\n

What could be done?

\n\n

\n

- There must be a system to make sure that the latest medical devices, including stents, are priced differently.
  \n
- All aspects involving medical device development must be fast-tracked and

should be as **transparent** as possible.
\n
- The government must **support Indian stent manufacturers** and medical device research so that we don’t have to depend on imported stents.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Indian Express

\n