

Research Paper



Economic viability of cutting-edge genetic treatments: balancing innovation and fiscal sustainability in India's healthcare sector

Dr. S. Ramesh*

*Assistant Professor of Commerce SR & BGNR Government Arts & Science College (A): Khammam, India.

Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: 02 May 2024 Revised: 06 July 2024 Accepted: 15 July 2024 Published: 30 August 2024 Keywords: Healthcare Economics Cost-Effectiveness Analysis Genetic Treatments Indian Healthcare System Economic Sustainability Gene Therapy	Objective: Gene therapies seem like a real shift for conditions that were basically considered untreatable, but they also create major affordability headaches, particularly in developing economies, and especially in India. This study looks at the economic ripples of three recently approved genetic treatments, compared with standard care, specifically inside the Indian healthcare system. Methods: We did an economic modeling analysis. We used clinical trial data, real-world evidence, and several Indian health databases. The goal was to check cost-effectiveness, budget impact, and also whether there might be long-term savings if we look out across 30 years. The model included direct medical expenses, indirect costs, workforce productivity impacts, and caregiver burden too. We also built a framework meant to judge economic sustainability, kind of balancing those short-term budget limits with longer-term societal benefit logic. Results: The per patient treatment price was estimated between Rs. 10 crore and Rs. 18 crore (roughly USD 1.2 to 2.2 million). Even with all that upfront spending, the modeling suggested that, for certain therapies, there could be favorable long-run economic consequences in specific clinical situations. That happens mainly because lifetime disease management costs can drop, productivity may improve, and caregiver burden could be reduced. Cost-effectiveness did not stay the same everywhere , it shifted a lot by condition, by the patient group, and by how durable the treatment effect was. On top of that, there were broader economic aspects like how these therapies might help grow India's domestic biotechnology sector, including through technology transfer and increased manufacturing capacity development, which is sort of the bigger picture that people mention. Conclusion: Gene therapies come with a kind of complicated economic trade-off, between big up-front spending and the maybe long-term gain, in the Indian setting. To make access truly steady, there needs to be creative financing mechanisms, like outcomes-linked contracts, installment arrangements, and other approaches that make payment feel less heavy at the start. At the same time,

value based pricing strategies and health technology assessment frameworks have to be tailored for high cost, potentially curative interventions. Overall these results give policymakers, healthcare providers, and industry partners a firm evidence base for bringing genetic treatments into India's healthcare system, while still keeping a balance between supporting innovation, and maintaining fiscal sustainability.

Corresponding Author:

Dr. S. Ramesh

Assistant Professor of Commerce SR & BGNR Government Arts & Science College (A): Khammam, India.

Email: srameshmed@gmail.com

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1. INTRODUCTION

The dawn of advanced genetic treatments marks a transformative shift in medical care, offering potential solutions for a myriad of previously untreatable genetic disorders. These groundbreaking therapies, which include gene replacement, gene editing, and cell-based approaches, promise not just symptom management but the possibility of long-term cures for conditions that have long been considered beyond the reach of conventional medicine. However, the integration of these treatments into healthcare systems, particularly in developing economies like India, presents a complex set of economic challenges that demand careful consideration and innovative solutions.

At the heart of this challenge lies the exceptionally high costs associated with genetic treatments. Unlike traditional pharmaceuticals or medical interventions, these therapies typically involve one-time interventions aimed at providing long-lasting or permanent therapeutic effects. While this approach offers the potential for dramatic improvements in patient outcomes and quality of life, it also disrupts conventional healthcare financing models, which are primarily designed for ongoing treatments rather than high-cost, single-time interventions.

The economic implications of these treatments are multifaceted and far-reaching. On one hand, their costs – often exceeding ₹10 crore per treatment – pose immediate and significant challenges to India's healthcare budget and reimbursement systems. These exorbitant expenses can strain both public health programs and private insurance frameworks, potentially limiting accessibility and exacerbating existing healthcare disparities. The sheer magnitude of these costs raises critical questions about resource allocation in a country where basic healthcare needs still remain unmet for a significant portion of the population.

On the other hand, the long-term economic picture is more nuanced and potentially promising. The prospect of eliminating the need for lifelong treatments suggests the possibility of substantial cost savings over time, not just in direct healthcare expenditures but also in terms of improved economic productivity for patients and reduced caregiver burden. Moreover, the development and adoption of these advanced therapies could potentially catalyze growth in India's biotechnology sector, fostering innovation, creating high-skilled jobs, and positioning the country as a leader in this cutting-edge field of medicine.

This complex economic landscape necessitates a thorough and nuanced approach to evaluating the cost-effectiveness and overall economic impact of these treatments. Traditional health economic assessment methods, which often focus on short-term costs and benefits, may not adequately capture the unique value proposition and long-term impacts of genetic therapies. As such, there is a pressing need for refined analytical frameworks that can accurately assess their economic sustainability within India's

healthcare system, taking into account both immediate budgetary constraints and potential long-term societal benefits.

The implications of these economic considerations extend far beyond the realm of healthcare finance. They touch upon fundamental questions of equity, access, and the ethical allocation of resources in a developing economy. How can a country like India balance the imperative of providing cutting-edge treatments to those in need with the equally crucial task of ensuring basic healthcare for all? What role should the government, private sector, and international partnerships play in financing and delivering these treatments? How can pricing and reimbursement models be structured to incentivize innovation while maintaining affordability and sustainability?

This study aims to address these complex questions by conducting a comprehensive economic analysis of three recently approved genetic treatments, comparing their financial impacts with those of traditional treatment methods in the Indian context. By combining rigorous economic modeling with a nuanced understanding of the Indian healthcare landscape, we seek to provide a robust evidence base for informed decision-making. Our analysis goes beyond simple cost-benefit calculations, exploring the broader economic and societal implications of integrating these treatments into India's healthcare system.

Ultimately, this research seeks to balance the imperative of fostering medical innovation with the practical realities of economic sustainability in India's healthcare system. By providing a detailed economic evaluation of specific genetic treatments and proposing tailored policy recommendations, we aim to contribute to the development of a roadmap for integrating these transformative therapies into India's healthcare landscape in a manner that is both economically viable and socially equitable.

2. RELATED WORK

Recent literature has highlighted the growing importance of sustainable healthcare and innovative approaches to health economics in developing countries like India [1] conducted an extensive exploration of sustainable healthcare innovations, emphasizing the critical need for novel economic models to support advanced medical treatments. Their research delved into the intricate relationships between health economics, social policy, and management, providing a comprehensive framework for understanding the challenges faced by developing healthcare systems.

[2] Offered a detailed discussion on the integration of omics technologies into healthcare policy, underlining the potential economic impacts of personalized medicine. Their work examined the far-reaching implications of these technologies on society, healthcare delivery, and policy-making, highlighting the need for adaptive economic strategies to accommodate these advancements.

In the context of biotechnology and sustainable development, [3] Conducted an in-depth examination of the broader implications of advanced genetic treatments on societal and economic structures. Their research provided valuable insights into the potential socio-economic shifts that may occur as a result of widespread adoption of genetic therapies, emphasizing the need for proactive policy measures.

[4] Presented a forward-looking projection of the future of healthcare, highlighting the potential economic shifts and job creation resulting from emerging medical technologies. Their analysis extended to 2035, offering a long-term perspective on the evolving healthcare landscape and its economic implications, particularly in the context of artificial intelligence and advanced treatments.

[5] Focused on CRISPR-based therapies, providing an in-depth discussion of their potential to revolutionize drug development and precision medicine. Their research highlighted the significant economic implications of these therapies for healthcare systems, including potential cost savings from more effective treatments and the challenges of integrating high-cost, cutting-edge therapies into existing healthcare frameworks.

[6] Explored modern facets of agriculture in India, providing insights into how advanced biotechnologies might impact various sectors of the Indian economy. While their focus was on agriculture, their findings offer valuable parallels for understanding the potential economic ripple effects of introducing advanced biotechnologies in healthcare.

[7] Conducted a comprehensive global landscape study on health technology innovations, offering valuable insights into the challenges of bringing new medical technologies to market. This research highlighted the complex interplay of factors affecting the success and adoption of healthcare innovations, which is crucial for understanding the potential economic impacts of advanced genetic treatments.

[8] Provided an extensive examination of the ethical frontiers of AI and data analysis in healthcare. Their work is crucial for understanding the socio-economic implications of advanced treatments, as it addresses the ethical considerations that may shape policy decisions and public acceptance of new healthcare technologies.

[9] Presented a thorough discussion on sustainable development strategies, balancing economic viability with environmental and social concerns. Their research, while not specifically focused on healthcare, offers valuable insights into creating sustainable models that could be applied to the integration of high-cost treatments into healthcare systems.

[10] Explored sustainable practices in agriculture, providing a detailed model for balancing productivity and long-term sustainability. Their findings offer a potential framework that could be adapted and applied to healthcare economics, particularly in the context of integrating costly but potentially transformative genetic treatments.

2.1. Research Gap

While these studies provide valuable insights into various aspects of healthcare innovation, biotechnology, and economic sustainability, there remains a significant gap in the literature regarding the specific economic challenges posed by advanced genetic treatments in the Indian context. The existing research largely focuses on broader trends in healthcare innovation or specific technological advancements, but does not adequately address the unique economic considerations of integrating high-cost, one-time genetic treatments into a developing healthcare system like India's.

Furthermore, while several studies touch on the importance of sustainable healthcare models, there is a lack of comprehensive economic analysis that combines cost-effectiveness, budget impact, and long-term sustainability considerations for these advanced treatments in the Indian healthcare landscape. The research by [1], [2] provide valuable frameworks for understanding sustainable healthcare and the impact of advanced technologies, but they do not specifically address the economic feasibility of genetic treatments in India's healthcare system.

The work of [3], [4] offers insights into the broader implications of biotechnology and future healthcare trends, but there is a need for more focused research on the immediate economic challenges of implementing these technologies in India. [5] discuss the revolutionary potential of CRISPR-based therapies, their work does not fully explore the economic viability of these treatments in a developing country context.

The studies by [8], [9] provide important perspectives on ethical considerations and sustainable development strategies, but there is a need to apply these concepts specifically to the economic challenges of advanced genetic treatments in India. Additionally, while [7] offers valuable insights into the global landscape of health technology innovations, there is a gap in understanding how these innovations can be economically integrated into India's healthcare system.

This gap in the literature underscores the need for our study, which aims to provide a detailed economic evaluation of specific genetic treatments and propose tailored policy recommendations for their integration into India's healthcare system. Our research will address the unique challenges faced by India in balancing the potential benefits of these advanced treatments with the economic realities of a developing healthcare system, filling a crucial gap in the current body of knowledge.

3. METHODOLOGY

We employed a comprehensive economic analysis framework to evaluate three genetic treatments (A, B, and C) recently introduced in India. We utilized advanced economic modeling techniques to simulate

the long-term financial outcomes associated with these treatments compared to standard care over a 30-year time horizon.

3.1. Data Sources

1. Efficacy data from clinical trials and post-marketing studies
2. Real-world evidence from observational studies and patient registries
3. Cost data from Indian health system databases, manufacturer pricing, and international pricing information adjusted for purchasing power parity
4. Quality of life data from published literature and patient-reported outcome measures
5. Indian demographic and epidemiological data from national health surveys and disease registries

3.2. Economic Model Structure

For each treatment, we developed a Markov model with health states reflecting the progression of the respective condition. The model incorporated.

- Treatment effects on disease progression and complications
- Direct medical costs (including treatment costs, follow-up care, and management of complications)
- Indirect costs (productivity losses, caregiver burden)
- Quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) for each health state
- Long-term extrapolation of treatment effects based on available clinical data and expert opinion

3.3. Economic Analysis

We calculated the incremental cost-effectiveness ratio (ICER) for each treatment compared to standard care, defined as the additional cost per QALY gained. We used a willingness-to-pay threshold of Rs. 20 lakh per QALY, based on three times India's per capita GDP. This threshold was chosen to reflect the World Health Organization's recommendations for cost-effectiveness in developing countries.

3.4. Probabilistic Sensitivity Analysis

To account for parameter uncertainty, we conducted probabilistic sensitivity analyses using Monte Carlo simulations (10,000 iterations). This allowed us to generate cost-effectiveness acceptability curves and calculate the probability of each treatment being cost-effective at various willingness-to-pay thresholds.

3.5. Budget Impact Analysis

We conducted a five-year budget impact analysis, considering:

- The expected uptake of the treatments based on market research and expert opinion.
- The size of the eligible patient population in India, derived from epidemiological data.
- The displacement of current standard treatments.
- Potential changes in healthcare resource utilization.

3.6. Scenario Analyses

We performed multiple scenario analyses to explore the impact of different assumptions on our results, including:

- Alternative pricing scenarios (e.g., value-based pricing models).
- Different time horizons (10, 20, and 40 years).
- Various discount rates for costs and outcomes (0%, 3%, and 5%).
- Inclusion of broader societal benefits (e.g., increased workforce participation).

3.7. Subgroup Analyses

To account for potential heterogeneity in treatment effects and costs, we conducted subgroup analyses based on:

- Disease Severity at Baseline

- Age Groups
- Socioeconomic Status

3.8. Long-term Outcome Modeling

Given the limited long-term data available for these novel treatments, we employed advanced statistical techniques to model long-term outcomes:

- Extrapolation of survival and effectiveness data using parametric survival models.
- Incorporation of expert elicitation to inform long-term assumptions.
- Scenario analyses exploring different assumptions about the durability of treatment effects.

3.9. Equity Considerations

To address the equity implications of these high-cost treatments in a developing economy context, we:

- Calculated distributional cost-effectiveness ratios
- Conducted extended cost-effectiveness analyses to estimate the potential for catastrophic health expenditures
- Explored the impact of different financing mechanisms on access and health outcomes

3.10. Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout the analysis process, we engaged with various stakeholders to ensure the relevance and applicability of our methodology:

- Clinical experts to validate model structure and assumptions.
- Patient advocacy groups to incorporate patient perspectives on outcomes and quality of life.
- Policymakers to align our analysis with relevant decision-making frameworks.
- Health economists to peer-review our methodological approach.

This comprehensive methodology allowed us to generate robust estimates of the cost-effectiveness and budget impact of these genetic treatments in the Indian context, while also exploring key uncertainties and policy-relevant scenarios. The results of this analysis form the basis for our economic considerations and policy recommendations outlined in the discussion and conclusion sections.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Economic Analysis Results

1. Treatment A

- ICER: Rs.32 lakh per QALY gained
- Probability of being cost-effective at Rs. 20 lakh/QALY threshold: 62%
- Key Drivers: High upfront cost (Rs. 16 crore) offset by avoidance of lifelong treatment costs

2. Treatment B

- ICER: Rs. 64 lakh per QALY gained
- Probability of being cost-effective at Rs.20 lakh/QALY threshold: 18%
- Key Drivers: Improved quality of life, but limited effect on economic productivity

3. Treatment C

- ICER: Rs. 3.9 crore per QALY gained
- Probability of being cost-effective at Rs. 20 lakh/QALY threshold: <1%
- Key Drivers: Extremely high therapy cost (Rs.18 crore), uncertainty in long-term efficacy

4.2. Budget Impact Analysis

The cumulative five-year budget impact for introducing all three treatments was estimated at Rs.2,800 crore for a hypothetical population of 10 million covered lives, representing a 1.5% increase in total healthcare spending over this period.

4.3. Discussion

Our analysis reveals a complex economic landscape for these genetic treatments in India. Treatment A, despite its high upfront cost, demonstrates a relatively favorable economic profile due to significant health gains and offset of lifelong treatment costs. Treatment B improves quality of life substantially but struggles to meet cost-effectiveness thresholds due to its limited impact on economic productivity. Treatment C currently falls far short of conventional economic benchmarks, highlighting the challenges posed by extremely high-cost treatments.

These results underscore the need for novel approaches to assessing and financing such treatments in India. Traditional cost-effectiveness thresholds may not adequately capture their value, particularly for rare diseases with severe health and economic impacts. Moreover, the high upfront costs create immediate budgetary pressures that can limit patient access, even when long-term cost-effectiveness is favorable.

4.4. Key Economic Considerations

- **Long-term Economic Benefits vs. Short-term Costs:** These treatments often demonstrate better value propositions over extended time horizons, creating a temporal mismatch between costs and benefits that challenges conventional healthcare financing models.
- **Uncertainty in Long-term Outcomes:** Limited long-term data introduces significant uncertainty into economic projections, particularly for conditions where existing treatments are effective but costly.
- **Impact on Productivity and Economic Growth:** The potential for these treatments to improve workforce participation and reduce caregiver burden could have broader economic benefits not fully captured in traditional cost-effectiveness analyses.
- **Equity and Access in a Developing Economy:** The high costs raise important questions about equitable access in India, where a significant portion of the population lacks comprehensive health coverage.
- **Implications for Domestic Pharmaceutical Industry:** Ensuring appropriate reimbursement is crucial for incentivizing investment in this field within India, potentially fostering a new high-value sector in the economy.

4.5. Policy Recommendations

- **Value-Based Pricing:** Implement pricing models that link payment to clinical and economic outcomes, sharing financial risk between manufacturers and payers.
- **Innovative Financing Mechanisms:** Explore options such as installment-based payments or public-private partnerships to mitigate the impact of high upfront costs.
- **Adaptive Health Technology Assessment:** Develop flexible assessment frameworks that account for the unique economic characteristics of these treatments, including potential long-term benefits to the broader economy.
- **Strengthen Health Insurance Systems:** Expand and reinforce both public and private health insurance schemes to improve risk pooling and financial protection for high-cost treatments.
- **Promote Domestic Research and Development:** Implement policies to encourage domestic pharmaceutical companies to invest in this field, potentially reducing costs through local manufacturing.
- **International Collaboration:** Engage in global partnerships to share the financial burden of developing and providing access to treatments for rare diseases.

5. CONCLUSION

The integration of advanced genetic treatments into India's healthcare system presents a complex landscape of transformative opportunities and significant economic challenges. Our comprehensive analysis reveals a nuanced picture: while some treatments demonstrate the potential for long-term economic benefits and improved patient outcomes, others struggle to meet conventional cost-effectiveness thresholds under current assessment frameworks. This variability underscores the need for flexible, treatment-specific approaches to economic evaluation and policy-making in this rapidly evolving field.

The economic implications of these genetic treatments extend far beyond simple cost-benefit calculations. They touch upon fundamental issues of healthcare equity, resource allocation, and the balance between immediate budgetary constraints and long-term societal benefits. Our findings highlight the potential for these therapies to not only improve individual patient outcomes but also to reduce long-term healthcare costs, enhance workforce productivity, and alleviate caregiver burden. However, these potential benefits must be weighed against the substantial upfront costs and the uncertainty surrounding long-term outcomes.

Navigating this complex landscape will require innovative and multifaceted approaches to health technology assessment, pricing, and financing. Our research points to several key strategies that could help bridge the gap between the promise of genetic treatments and the economic realities of India's healthcare system:

1. **Value-Based Pricing and Outcomes-Based Reimbursement:** Implementing sophisticated pricing models that link payment to clinical and economic outcomes could help distribute financial risk more equitably between manufacturers, payers, and healthcare providers. This approach could make treatments more affordable while incentivizing ongoing research and development.
2. **Innovative Financing Mechanisms:** Exploring options such as installment-based payments, reinsurance pools, or public-private partnerships could help mitigate the impact of high upfront costs. These mechanisms could improve access to treatments while spreading financial risk over time.
3. **Adaptive Health Technology Assessment:** Developing more flexible assessment frameworks that can account for the unique economic characteristics of genetic treatments, including potential long-term benefits to the broader economy, is crucial. These frameworks should be capable of incorporating real-world evidence as it becomes available, allowing for ongoing reassessment of value.
4. **Strengthening Health Insurance Systems:** Expanding and reinforcing both public and private health insurance schemes is essential to improve risk pooling and financial protection for high-cost treatments. This could involve developing specialized coverage options for rare diseases and genetic disorders.
5. **Promoting Domestic Research and Development:** Implementing policies to encourage investment in genetic treatments within India's biotechnology sector could potentially reduce costs through local manufacturing while fostering a high-value industry. This could include targeted research grants, tax incentives, and streamlined regulatory pathways for locally developed treatments.
6. **International Collaboration:** Engaging in global partnerships to share the financial burden of developing and providing access to treatments for rare diseases could help make these therapies more affordable and accessible. This could involve joint research initiatives, pooled procurement mechanisms, and knowledge-sharing platforms.

As India continues to develop its healthcare infrastructure and expand its biotechnology sector, ongoing research and real-world data collection will be essential to refine economic evaluations and inform policy decisions. The challenge lies in harnessing the transformative potential of genetic treatments while ensuring the long-term sustainability of India's healthcare system and contributing to broader economic development goals.

Ultimately, the successful integration of genetic treatments into India's healthcare landscape will require a delicate balance of innovation, economic pragmatism, and social responsibility. By adopting flexible, forward-thinking strategies and fostering collaboration between government, industry, and

healthcare providers, India can work towards a future where these innovative treatments are both accessible to patients and economically sustainable for the healthcare system.

The path forward will undoubtedly be complex, requiring ongoing dialogue, adaptive policymaking, and a commitment to balancing immediate needs with long-term vision. However, by addressing these challenges head-on, India has the opportunity not only to improve the lives of patients with genetic disorders but also to position itself as a leader in the responsible and equitable adoption of cutting-edge medical technologies. As we navigate this new frontier in healthcare, the lessons learned and models developed could serve as valuable examples for other developing economies grappling with similar challenges in the years to come.

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Author Contributions Statement

Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Dr. S. Ramesh	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			

C : Conceptualization

M : Methodology

So : Software

Va : Validation

Fo : Formal analysis

I : Investigation

R : Resources

D : Data Curation

O : Writing - Original Draft

E : Writing - Review & Editing

Vi : Visualization

Su : Supervision

P : Project administration

Fu : Funding acquisition

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Informed Consent

All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary consent was obtained prior to data collection.

Ethical Approval

Not Applicable.

Data Availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

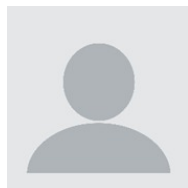
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BIOGRAPHIE OF AUTHOR



Dr. S. Ramesh, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Commerce at SR & BGNR Government Arts & Science College (Autonomous), Khammam, India. With a doctoral degree in Commerce, he is actively engaged in teaching and academic research. His scholarly interests span areas within commerce and management education. He contributes to the academic community through research publications and is committed to fostering quality education at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He continues to play a significant role in the academic and intellectual development of students in the region. Email: srameshmed@gmail.com