

Price Control Decision on Coronary Stents

Why in news?

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The National Pharmaceuticals Pricing Authority (NPPA) has decreased the price of Drug eluting Stents.

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What are drug eluting stents?

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- Stents are usually metal mesh tubes inserted during PCI, a procedure that widens the blocked artery by temporarily inserting and inflating a tiny balloon.

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- Coronary stents are used to open narrowed arteries, reduce symptoms like chest pain and treat a heart attack.

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- Even with stents, arteries can sometimes become blocked again. Drug-eluting stents can make this less likely to happen.

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- Drug-eluting stents have a polymer coating over mesh that emits a drug over time to help keep the blockage from coming back.

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What is the decision on stent pricing?

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- India's drug pricing regulator NPPA has further brought down the cost of drug-eluting stents (DES) from Rs.29,600 to Rs.27,890.

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- While the cost of bare-metal stents has increased marginally from Rs.7,400 to Rs.7,660.

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- The move comes a year after the NPPA slashed stent rates by nearly 85%.

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- The NPPA also decided against the request of multinational stent makers for a new category for advanced stents.

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What is the need for this move?

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- In India there is a very high incidence of coronary artery disease (CAD) associated with high morbidity and mortality and CAD has become a major public health problem.

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- The CAD drug market in India was an exploitive market system characterised by exorbitant, irrational and restrictive trade margin especially for stents.

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- The NPPA's analysis proved that profit margins for stents are as high as 400% and thus made an intervention for cost optimisation.

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- The NPPA held meetings with eminent cardiologists, and found that its earlier move to reduce the price has led to an increase more angioplasties and reduction in bypass surgeries.

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- Thus NPPA made this move to fix the ceiling prices of coronary stents in order to protect public interest.

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What are the benefits from this move?

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- Bare-metal stents have a significantly higher rate of restenosis (the recurrence of abnormal narrowing of an artery or valve after corrective surgery).

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- It will help more people opt for DES that are technologically better and more advanced.

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- This Price capping will minimise the expenditure in the health sector and allow more people to benefit from it.

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- The new order also allows transparency and better government control and

audit ease.

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- Patients will have the option to get a stent and accessories from outside the establishment, and manufacturers are allowed only 8% trade margin.

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- It encourages people to opt for better treatment plans and most importantly break the nexus of unethical pricing.

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Source: The Hindu

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