

## **Very Costly Medicines being Prescribed in Private Practice**

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**P**eople often think that 'surgeons' are very costly and this was true till some time back. Today a single prescription of a physician could cost a patient the same amount as a CABG (coronary bypass surgery), which costs Rs. 2.5 lacs!

The following are a few examples of very costly medicines being prescribed in private practice :

*Gastroenterology* : A course of Peg. Interferon once a week for six months along with ribavirin orally for treatment of hepatitis C could cost the patient around Rs. 2 lacs.

*Rheumatology* : Some patients of rheumatoid arthritis do not respond to standard treatment. Hence, they are advised injections of TNF inhibitors (e.g. infliximab), which can cost the patient about Rs. 2 to 3 lacs per year (however the duration may vary). Still if there is no response, injections of interleukins or  $\beta$  cell depletors like rituximab are prescribed, which are much more costly.

*Nephrology* : In patients having chronic renal failure, deficiency of erythropoietin can cause anaemia. It is treated with injections of erythropoietin, which cost Rs. 50,000/- or more for a course.

*Haematology* : Thrombocytopenia often occurs after dengue or viral fevers. If the platelet count falls below 10,000 especially with bleeding from any orifice, it calls for course of immunoglobulins, which cost around Rs. 30,000/- to 40,000/-.

*Leukaemias* : Oncology drugs used in

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leukaemias can cost lacs of rupees depending on the type of leukaemia.

*Oncology* : Drugs used in the treatment of cancers can cost lacs of rupees, which is much more than the cost of surgical treatment.

*CNS* : Acute polyneuritis (Guillain Barre) patients require a course of immunoglobulins costing Rs. 30,000/- to 50,000/-.

*CVS* : In acute myocardial infarction, an injection of a thrombolytic drug like alteplase costs about Rs. 30,000/- or more.

*Respiratory system* : Once the patient has MDR or XDR pulmonary tuberculosis, the cost of 2nd line drugs can be Rs. 5000/- to 10,000/- per month for 1 to 3 years!

*AIDS* : Once CD<sub>4</sub> count falls below 300, HAART drugs are started. The cost is around Rs. 5000/- per month lifetime (as long as the patient lives). And if the patient becomes resistant to 1<sup>st</sup> line drugs, the cost of second line drugs is Rs. 10,000/- per month or more.

*Osteoporosis* : If a patient of osteoporosis becomes resistant and/or shows poor response to bisphosphonates, she may need a daily injection of PTH analogue, for duration of 2 years. The cost of this treatment is around Rs. 2.5 to 5 lacs.

*Infections* : Some antibiotics given for infections, can cost more than a thousand rupees per injection! For example, injection sodium (ertapenem (ertalym) costs Rs. 2400/- per injection.