

Economic Studies on Non-Communicable Diseases and Injuries in India: A Systematic Review

Indrani Gupta and Arjun Roy

Abstract

The burden from non-communicable diseases and injuries (NCDI) in India is increasing rapidly. In the background of low public sector investment in the health sector generally, and a high financial burden on households for treatment, the aim of the research was to understand the extent to which economic analysis has been used in India to (1) analyze the impact of NCDI and (2) evaluate prevention and treatment interventions. Specifically, the analysis focused on the type of economic analysis used, disease categories, funding patterns, authorship, and author characteristics. A systematic review based on economic keywords to identify studies on NCDI in India published was undertaken. The results indicated that a majority of the studies were economic impact studies, followed by economic evaluation studies, especially cost-effectiveness analysis. In the costing/partial economic evaluation category, most were cost-description and cost-analysis studies. Under the economic impact/economic burden category, most studies investigated out-of-pocket spending. The studies were mostly on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and neoplasms. Slightly over half of the studies were funded, with funding coming mainly from outside of India. Half of the studies were led by domestic authors. In most of the studies, the lead author was a clinician or a public health professional; however, most of the economist-led studies were by authors from outside India. The results indicate the lack of engagement of economists generally and health economists in particular in research on NCDI in India. Demand from health policy makers for evidence-based decision making appears to be lacking, which in turn solidifies the divergence between economics and health policy, and highlights the need to prioritize scarce resources based on evidence regarding what works. Capacity building in health economics needs focus, and the government's support in this is recommended.