



"COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS INTO VACCINE REGULATION AND DEVELOPMENT: ANALYZING THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA"

CHEGUDI LIDIYA KUSUMA LATHA^{*1}

¹Student, A. U. College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Andhra University, Visakhapatnam- 530003, Andhra Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT:

Vaccines are essential for maintaining public health since they offer immunity to a number of diseases. This study compares the vaccine regulation and development processes in the United States and India, highlighting the roles of key regulatory bodies, legislation, and stages of vaccine development. In the U.S., the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) oversees a rigorous approval process, guided by significant legislation like the Prescription Drug User Fee Act (PDUFA) and the FDA Modernization Act. India's vaccine regulation is managed by multiple agencies, including the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO). Both countries follow a multi-phase clinical development process, although they face common challenges such as immune response variability and production costs. The study underscores the importance of stringent regulatory frameworks. And also the global nature of the vaccine market, advocating for international collaboration to standardize alternative testing methods. Despite differences in their regulatory approaches, the U.S. and India continue to advance vaccine innovation and public health protection, addressing both traditional and emerging health threats.

Key words: Vaccines, CBER, PDUFA, BLA, ACIP

Introduction:

Vaccines represent an innovative class of pharmaceutical products that align with the definition of drugs and biological agents. They stand out as a crucial contribution to the enhancement of public health. A Vaccine functions as a biological substance that enhances the body's immunity against a specific disease.[1]Typically, a Vaccine consists of a component that mimics a disease-causing microorganism, often comprising weakened or inactivated forms of the microbes.[2]Vaccines are among the most noteworthy accomplishments in the realms of science and public health[3].

Vaccines are a recent addition to the pharmaceutical realm, falling under the categories of drugs and biological products. A vaccination serves as a prescribed remedy aimed at boosting immunity against a particular disease. The vaccine plays a crucial role in initiating an immune response, enabling the body to combat infectious diseases. The production of vaccines is a meticulous and time-consuming process, tightly regulated to ensure safety and effectiveness[4].The introduction of vaccinations is hailed as a major milestone for humanity in the 20th century. Vaccines typically contain a weakened version of the microbe to induce immunity without causing infection. This ensures that the body recognizes the microbe as foreign, promoting a robust immune response against potential infections[5].

A vaccine is a substance administered to prevent infection or manage diseases caused by particular pathogens. Pharmaceutical firms and distributors play a key role in this process. The Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER) within the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for overseeing the safety, quality, and efficacy of vaccines in the United States. The evaluation of vaccine applications falls under various departments within CBER, such as the Office of Vaccine Research and Review, Office of Compliance and Biologics Quality, and Office of Biostatistics and Epidemiology. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) also plays a crucial role in vaccine regulation[1].

United states:

Regulations and Legislations:

The regulation of vaccines in the United States has experienced significant changes throughout the years in order to align with advancements made by the scientific community. Legislative acts such as the Prescription Drug User Fee Act, 1992 (PDUFA) and the FDA Modernization Act, 1997 have been consistently revised to address the evolving landscape of technology, commerce, and public health issues emerging in the 21st century. While the primary goal of the PDUFA in 1992 was to expedite the review process for manufacturers, subsequent modifications provided the FDA with additional resources to gather, evaluate, and approve safety data, as well as to establish a robust surveillance system for adverse events.

Conversely, the FDA Modernization Act of 1997 revolutionized the regulatory framework for vaccines by harmonizing the review protocols for vaccines and other biological products with those of pharmaceutical drugs, effectively eliminating the requirement for a separate establishment license for

biological products. Most recently, the Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act (FDAAA) of 2007 introduced significant changes to the legislation governing drugs and biological products, including vaccines. Initially, the FDAAA mandated that products necessitating a post-approval Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy must include this as part of the approval application. Additionally, it renewed the Best Pharmaceuticals for Children Act and reinstated the Pediatric Research Equity Act.[6]

Vaccine development:

Vaccines have a long history of use, with millions of individuals safely receiving them annually. Similar to other pharmaceuticals, each vaccine must undergo thorough and stringent testing procedures to ensure its safety prior to integration into a nation's vaccination program.[7]

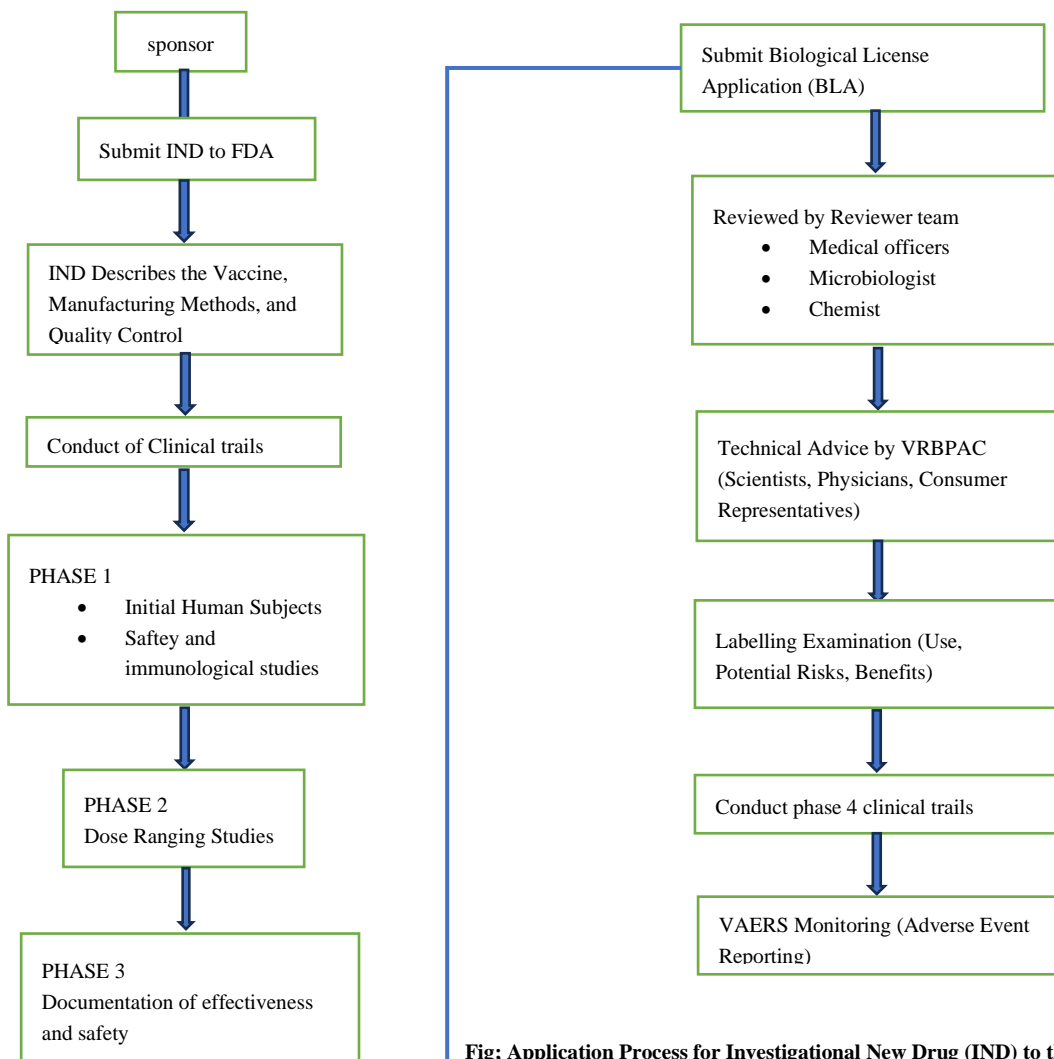
Stages of Vaccine Development

The typical stages of vaccine development encompass the

1. Pre-clinical phase,
2. Clinical development,
3. Regulatory review and approval process.

Pre-Clinical Stage:

The pre-clinical phase involves utilizing tissue-culture or cell-culture systems, as well as animal trials, to evaluate the efficacy and immunogenicity of the candidate vaccine. Animal models such as mice and monkeys are often employed. These studies provide researchers with insights into the immune responses anticipated in humans. Additionally, they establish a safe initial dosage for subsequent research phases and a secure method of vaccine administration. Researchers may refine the vaccine during the pre-clinical stage to enhance its effectiveness. Furthermore, challenge studies involving vaccinated animals being exposed to the target pathogen are conducted. Some vaccines do not progress beyond this phase due to inadequate immune responses. The pre-clinical stage typically lasts 1-2 years and frequently involves researchers from private sectors.[7]



Fig; Application Process for Investigational New Drug (IND) to the US FDA

IND Application:

A sponsor submits an Investigational New Drug (IND) application to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, detailing manufacturing and testing procedures, summarizing laboratory findings, and outlining the proposed study. Approval from an institutional review board, representing the site of the clinical trial, is mandatory. The Food and Drug Administration has a 30-day window for application approval. Following IND approval, the vaccine undergoes three testing phases.[8]

Clinical development

The process of clinical development consists of three distinct phases.

Phase I Vaccine Trials: Phase I vaccine trials entail a limited number of adult participants, typically ranging from 20 to 80 individuals. In cases where the vaccine is intended for children, initial testing is conducted on adults, with subsequent age reduction of test subjects towards the target group. These trials may or may not be blinded, with the utilization of placebos. The primary objectives of Phase I trials include evaluating the vaccine's safety and determining the nature and scope of the immune response it elicits.

Phase II Vaccine Trials: Phase II vaccine trials involve a larger cohort of several hundred subjects to assess the immunogenicity of the vaccine and provide preliminary insights into common adverse reactions. Sponsors are advised to engage with the CBER for a comprehensive discussion on their proposed phase III investigation upon completion of Phase II. The key aims of Phase II trials are to examine the vaccine's safety, immunogenicity, and optimal dosage.

Phase III Vaccine Trials: Upon the successful conclusion of Phase II trials, the vaccine progresses to extensive Phase III studies, encompassing thousands to tens of thousands of participants. These Phase III trials are randomized, double-blind studies where the experimental vaccine is compared against a placebo. The primary objective of Phase III trials is to establish the safety of the vaccine in a large population. Certain rare side effects may not manifest in smaller sample sizes from earlier phases, necessitating a significantly larger trial size to detect low-frequency events.

Phase IV Trials: Phase IV trials are discretionary investigations that pharmaceutical companies may undertake post-vaccine approval. These trials may extend to evaluate the vaccine's safety, effectiveness, and additional potential applications.[8]

Licensing Phase:

Prior to submitting a Biologics License Application (BLA) for a new vaccine, sponsors are advised to arrange a pre-BLA meeting with the FDA to review clinical study summaries, submission format, ongoing study status, and other pertinent details. The BLA submission should demonstrate adherence to standards concerning various aspects such as organization, personnel, facilities, equipment, production processes, packaging, labelling, distribution, laboratory controls, and record-keeping. It must encompass nonclinical and clinical data demonstrating safety, purity, potency, detailed manufacturing procedures, stability data, product samples, test outcomes, and label examples. The manufacturing site must be prepared for inspection, and an environmental assessment or exemption claim should be included. The FDA's evaluation entails facility inspection and potential advisory committee consultation prior to licensure determination.[9]

Not all adverse events reported to VAERS are, in fact, caused by vaccinations. It is likely that not all adverse events resulting from vaccination are reported to VAERS. According to the CDC, certain adverse events such as swelling at the injection site are under-reported. In agreement with the CDC, serious adverse events are more likely to be reported than minor ones, especially when they occur shortly after vaccination. VAERS has identified numerous rare adverse events linked to vaccinations.[10]

India:**Vaccine regulations**

Various regulatory agencies oversee vaccine registration in India, including the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, National Technical Advisory Group on Immunization, Indian Council for Medical Research, and Central Drugs Standard Control Organization.[11]

India has a rich history of vaccine production, exemplified by facilities like the Haffkine Institute, which was prequalified by the WHO to manufacture vaccines before India's independence from the United Kingdom in 1947. Waldemar Haffkine developed the world's first plague vaccine in 1897.[12]

Development process for vaccine:

Vaccine development is a lengthy and intricate process that can span 10-15 years, involving extensive research and testing across different stages before final approval and large-scale production. With advancements in technology, medical knowledge, and expedited approvals, experts suggest that the Covid-19 vaccine may be ready for public use in about 12-18 months.[13]

Pre-clinical stage

During the pre-clinical stage, the safety, efficacy, and immune response elicited by the developed vaccine are evaluated through testing on animals such as mice or monkeys, or through cell-culturing techniques. This stage, lasting typically one to 2 years, helps determine the appropriate dosage and administration route for human trials. Challenge studies may also be conducted, where vaccinated animals are exposed to the target pathogen to assess outcomes. Many vaccines may fail to elicit the desired immune response at this stage, often requiring input from private industry researchers.[14]

Phase 1 studies are designed to assess the safety, tolerability, and immune response elicited by the vaccine in a small group of fewer than 100 subjects. These studies, often conducted on healthy adults, provide early data on side effects and immune responses at different dosage levels, typically following a dose escalation study design once safety has been established at lower doses. The surveillance of vaccine safety and tolerability in research participants is conducted meticulously, with a focused approach aimed at detecting both local and systemic side effects, assessing clinical safety laboratory indicators, and observing individuals for the presence of any unexpected adverse events, severe adverse events, and adverse events of particular clinical significance.

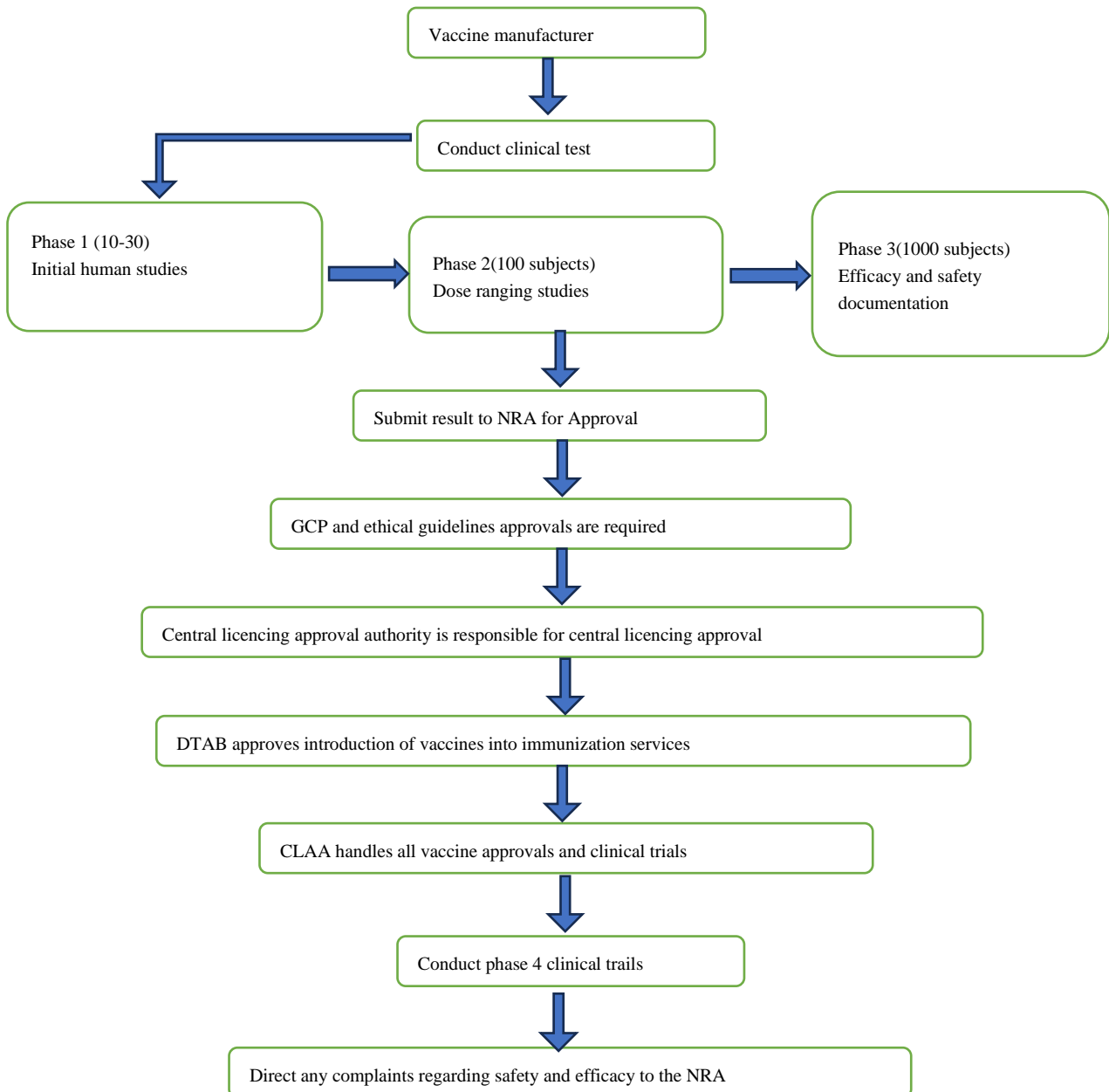


Fig. 2: Process for regulatory approval of vaccines in India[3]

Phase 2 studies are typically more extensive, involving numerous participants from the target population for the vaccine. These investigations in Phase 2 further enhance the optimal dosage and vaccination timetable. Similar to Phase 1 trials, these studies evaluate both the safety of the vaccine and the immune response, potentially indicating efficacy. Moreover, the increased participant numbers enable more accurate estimations of the percentages of individuals experiencing common short-term side effects.

The final phase in the clinical advancement of a vaccine is Phase 3 testing. These crucial trials are pivotal in determining the final balance of benefits and risks of the vaccine, upon which approval hinges. These trials are structured to establish vaccine effectiveness by observing the incidence of the target disease in individuals randomly assigned to receive the vaccine or a placebo. Phase 3 investigations encompass hundreds to tens of thousands of subjects. Similar to earlier phases, Phase 3 research also supervises participant safety. Extensive Phase 3 trials often involve thorough evaluations of vaccine adverse effects and immune responses in specified subgroups.[15]

Vaccine approval :

The DTAB gives its approval for vaccinations to be included in immunization programs. The mission of CDSCO is to protect and improve public health by ensuring the efficacy, quality, and safety of medications, cosmetics, and medical devices. In India, DCGL, CDSCO, and Drug Regulatory Authorities which are recognized as the federal and state drug control agencies as well as other regulatory bodies oversee licensing, approval, and adherence to Good Manufacturing Practices for vaccines.[16]

Challenges in Vaccine Development:

Addressing variations in the immune status of vaccine recipients poses a significant challenge during vaccine development. Most vaccines recommended for the elderly aim to reinforce existing immune memory from prior vaccinations or infections. While these booster shots somewhat reduce disease burdens, infections such as influenza, Streptococcus pneumoniae-induced illnesses, or herpes zoster reactivation remain prevalent among the elderly, underscoring inadequate recall responses. Deciphering vaccination outcomes in older individuals proves challenging, partly due to the diverse nature of immune responses linked to aging and the prevalence of underlying health conditions.[17]

The immune reaction to the flu vaccine may differ based on age. Children and older adults may exhibit a weaker immune response to the vaccine, rendering them less shielded from the flu compared to healthy adults. Consequently, high-dose influenza vaccines tailored for the elderly have been developed.[18]The scarcity of vaccine manufacturers is primarily due to the stringent quality assurance procedures involved. Developing countries previously struggled to afford costly vaccines, but the landscape is evolving, with many nations now benefiting from enhanced cost-effectiveness.[19]

The success of large-scale vaccination initiatives hinges on public acceptance of the vaccine. Achieving herd immunity would be challenging if a significant portion of society harbors hesitations towards vaccination.[20]

Comparison of united states and India:

Aspect	United states	India
Regulatory Bodies	FDA (CBER)	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, CDSCO, ICMR
Key Legislation	Prescription Drug User Fee Act (PDUFA), FDA Modernization Act, FDA Amendments Act (FDAAA)	Drugs and Cosmetics Act
Pre-Clinical Stage	Tissue-culture/cell-culture systems and animal testing (mice, monkeys). Typically lasts 1-2 years.	Similar approach with animal testing and cell-culture techniques. Lasts 1-2 years.
Phase I Trials	Involves 20-80 healthy adult volunteers to assess safety and immune response	Includes fewer than 100 subjects, focusing on safety and dose escalation.
Phase II Trials	Involves a few hundred people to assess immunogenicity and typical side effects.	Similar scale, refining dosage and vaccination schedules, with hundreds of participants.
Phase III Trials	large-scale (tens of thousands to thousands) trials to track unusual adverse events and assess the effectiveness of vaccines.	Large-scale trials, final determination of benefit vs. risk, with detailed side effect assessments.
Regulatory Review and Approval	Following pre-BLA meetings, the biologics license application (BLA) was submitted. FDA examines information, surveys establishments, and might confer with advisory groups.	Rigorous documentation and facility inspections by CDSCO. Approval based on compliance with safety, efficacy, and manufacturing standards.
Immune Response Variability	Difficulties arising from varying immunological reactions in different age groups, especially in the old and young	Similar challenges with age-related immune response variability.
Production and Cost	Strictly quality assurance programme and high production expenses may drive away manufacturers	Historically faced affordability issues, but recent advancements have improved cost-effectiveness.
Public Acceptance	Vaccine reluctance can hinder mass immunization programs, which can impact efforts to build herd immunity.	Vaccine hesitancy also a challenge, impacting herd immunity efforts.

Conclusion:

Since vaccines offer immunity against a variety of diseases, they are essential to public health. The processes of their approval and development are strictly regulated. Ensuring comprehensive testing and documentation, these processes are overseen in the United States by the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER), which is backed by laws like the FDA Modernization Act and the Prescription Drug User Fee Act.

The Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare oversee vaccination regulations in India. As vaccines adapt to new health threats and technology advancements, they continue to be a key achievement in public health despite hurdles including diverse immune responses and production costs.

Strong legal frameworks are in place in both nations to guarantee the effectiveness and safety of vaccines. While India has a multi-agency system, the United States benefits from a centralized regulatory body and streamlined procedures. Despite persistent obstacles in vaccine research and delivery, both countries are making progress in innovation and public health protection. This comparison highlights the critical function of regulatory agencies, stringent approval procedures, and the international scope of vaccination acceptance and regulation.

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