Human and Economic Cost of Disease Burden Due to Congenital Hypothyroidism in India: Too Little, but Not Too Late

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Background: Congenital hypothyroidism (CH) is one of the most common preventable causes of mental retardation. Implementing newborn screening (NBS) in >52 countries enabled early detection and to initiate treatment of neonates with CH. India is yet to implement a national NBS program even though an estimated 5–15% of sick newborns suffer from genetic and metabolic disorders. Recent pilot studies confirm that the CH incidence rates range from 1 in 500 to 1 in 3,400 live births. Our objective was to estimate overall incidence rates of congenital hypothyroidism and to evaluate the costs and benefits of implementing universal NBS for CH in India.

Methods: We used the best available epidemiological and cost data to synthesize incidence rates and screening costs for CH in India. We conducted a meta-analysis of country-specific published literature and included 14 studies to calculate baseline CH incidence rates. We used two models to estimate intellectual disability in unscreened cohorts. Disability-adjusted life years (DALY) were calculated to quantify burden of disease utilizing disability weights. Direct costs including screening, confirmatory tests, and treatment costs were obtained from public and private market sources. Economic benefits were calculated from lost DALY using human capital approach and value of statistical life methods, utilizing gross national income (GNI) per capita data and value of statistical life year (VSLY), respectively. Cost discounting was used to estimate the present value of future benefits over lifetime of affected newborns.

Results: The incidence rate of CH in India is 72 (95% CI: 58, 85) cases per 100,000 live births. Based on this data, 1 in 1,388 (95% CI: 1166, 1714) infants were diagnosed with CH in India for the year 2018. The estimated annual incidence ranged from 14,000 to 20,730 cases, and those at risk for intellectual disability ranged from 5,397 to 13,929 cases. Estimated discounted and undiscounted lost DALYs were 57,640 and 410,000, respectively. Direct annual costs for universal screening for CH in India is around USD187 million. Based on current incidence and expected severity of sequelae, economic losses ranged from USD 159 million to 1.1 billion. Benefit–cost ratios ranged from 1.8 to 6.
**INTRODUCTION**

Congenital hypothyroidism (CH) is the most common preventable cause of intellectual disability worldwide (1, 2). Primary congenital hypothyroidism is the result of developmental defects of the thyroid glands, mainly due to thyroid agenesis or dysgenesis or dyshormonogenesis that can lead to severe acute and chronic clinical symptoms including long-term intellectual impairment. Neonatal screening for CH, first implemented almost half a century ago, offers a window of opportunity for timely diagnosis of CH, to initiate appropriate treatment and prevent long-term morbidity. It is estimated that 7 in 10 newborns with CH are born in areas that have no neonatal screening programs (3).

Most of the industrialized nations have implemented healthcare system changes to incorporate newborn screening in the last five decades to detect early, treat promptly, and eliminate neurodevelopmental impairment from CH (4). Unfortunately, majority of nations with the highest burden of CH does not have effective, established universal newborn screening programs to eliminate disease burden. This poses considerable public health challenge to limit preventable chronic morbidity in population (3), as it is one of the most common causes of cognitive impairment in newborns that has an enormous societal impact if screening is not done and replacement therapies are not initiated in timely manner (5). Early detection and prompt treatment of CH (within the first 2 weeks of life) are essential to optimize the neurocognitive outcome, linear growth, the onset and progression of puberty, pubertal growth, and final height of affected neonates (6).

Moreover, morbidity from noncommunicable diseases is increasingly recognized to have sizeable economic impact on households, industries, and societies, both via the consumption of health services and via losses in income, productivity and human capital (Figure 1). Fortunately, in the past two decades, early initiation of treatment and improvement in the overall management of CH patients have resulted in better cognitive and motor developmental outcomes, comparable with those of controls (7).

**Conclusions:** Universal NBS for CH is one of the healthcare interventions that is beneficial to prevent morbidity and cost saving. The cumulative economic benefits, derived from prevention of intellectual disability, assuming cost effectiveness threshold of three times of gross domestic product per capita, far outweigh the direct and indirect costs of screening, treatment, and surveillance throughout the life of the affected individuals. Our analysis strongly supports the argument for investing in NBS that provides good value for money and would yield substantial financial gains for the country.

**Keywords:** congenital hypothyroidism, newborn screening, economic evaluation, value of statistical life, disability adjusted life year, newborn, India, Benefit-Cost Analysis

**Abbreviations:** CI, confidence interval; CH, congenital hypothyroidism deficiency; DALY, disability-adjusted life year; GNI, gross national income per capita; VSL, value per statistical life; VSLY, value per statistical life year; YLL, years of life lost; YLD, years lived with disability.
A modest number of disease-afflicted cases, encompassing overall improvement in societal health. At the same time, these programs should also be thoroughly evaluated beforehand to estimate projected net health benefits in order to invest in strong health systems that prioritize newborns with appropriate healthcare resource allocation.

The purpose of this study was to estimate the burden of disease, assess economic losses from reduced human capital secondary to disease-associated morbidity, and to examine benefits and costs from universal newborn screening program for CH in India. These data will inform country-specific estimates of CH in India and allow prioritization of resource allocations toward child health.

**METHODS**

**Design and Population**

Estimates of congenital hypothyroidism in India: Literature searches of electronic databases including PubMed, OVID, and Google Scholar were performed using a combination of search terms: (((((((Congenital hypothyroidism) AND (India))) AND (prevalence)) OR (incidence)) AND (newborn screening))). Of 13,330 studies identified by our initial search, we selected 178 publications that were relevant to our study. Among them, we identified 14 studies that provided incidence data. We excluded studies that had <500 subjects to minimize heterogeneity and to maximize precision and accuracy. We performed a random effects meta-analysis using standard techniques to calculate pooled estimates with 95% confidence intervals. We assessed heterogeneity using $I^2$ and publication bias with Eggers test. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$. For population parameters, including population, births, life expectancy, and GNI, relevant sources are shown in Table 1.

**Years of Life Lost, Years Lost Due to Disability, Disability-Adjusted Life Years**

The disability-adjusted life years (DALY) is defined as the sum of years of life lost (YLL) and years lost due to disability (YLD) (i.e., $\text{DALY} = \text{YLL} + \text{YLD}$). YLL was not calculated in this study as mortality is uncommon in cases with CH.

To perform a patient-focused analysis including the lifetime impact of congenital hypothyroidism on DALY, the morbidities in terms of intellectual disability anticipated with degree of severity of hypothyroidism were included in the calculation of YLD. Specifically, YLD was calculated by multiplying the incidence ($I$) of intellectual disability due to untreated congenital hypothyroidism by a disability weight ($DW$) (17) associated with the degree of disability and the anticipated duration of that state with intellectual disability ($L$) (i.e., $\text{YLD} = I \times DW \times L$). The DW was included in the calculation of the YLD
TABLE 1 | Input parameter pooled estimate for incidence of hypothyroidism in India.

| Input parameters | Lower | Upper | References |
|------------------|-------|-------|------------|
| Number of Births | 24,164,360 |  | MOHFW, GOI |
| Incidence of CH  | 0.000720 | 0.000857 | Point estimate from our study |
| Frequency of Sequelae-Model 1 | | | Barden et al. (15) |
| Mild ID          | 0.4 | | |
| Moderate ID      | 0.25 | | |
| Severe ID        | 0.15 | | |
| Frequency of Sequelae-Model 2 | | | ACMG, Committee on Genetics (16) |
| Mild ID          | 0.27 | | |
| Moderate ID      | 0.021 | | |
| Severe ID        | 0.019 | | |
| Disability weights | | | Mathers et al. (17) |
| Mild ID          | 0.29 | | |
| Moderate ID      | 0.43 | | |
| Severe ID        | 0.82 | | |
| GNI per capita   | $6,427 | | World Bank (PPP method) |

| Costs             | Lower | Upper | Reference |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Screening Costs   | $173,500,105 | | Our estimates |
| Confirmation Assay cost | $125,020 | $148,843 | |
| Medication Costs: | $8,501,347 | $10,121,354 | |
| Follow up Costs   | $4,000,634 | $4,762,990 | |
| Physician visits  | $1,500,238 | | |
| Laboratory costs  | $1,214,354 | | |

ID= Intellectual Disability; Costs converted from INR to 2018 USD.

account for severity of disease and disability. They range from 0 (perfect health) to 1 (worst possible health state). Frequencies of mild, moderate, and severe intellectual disability (ID) from CH and associated disability weights were obtained from existing literature (15, 16), as the accurate prevalence and projection of long-term outcomes of overt disabilities (intellectual or physical or behavioral) at population level, in the absence of established CH screening program, is difficult to capture and prone to have substantial variations as most of existing prevalence and outcome estimates come from published clinical case series literature. To quantify the magnitude of outcomes in the absence of screening, we developed two models—Model 1 and Model 2. Model 1 is based on the frequency of intellectual disability due to CH from previous economic evaluations from the United States and Australia (15, 47) where they followed evidence from clinical case series in the prescreening era. Model 2 is based on the American College of Medical Genetics (ACMG) committee estimates of intellectual impairments, used in cost utility analysis of newborn screening programs in the United States (19, 48). We used country-specific life expectancy assuming constant disability from undiagnosed and untreated CH for the lifetime of the neonate. In summary, one DALY is equivalent to loss of 1 year of healthy life.

The notation “DALYs (r,K,ß)” is used to describe the results: where r = discount rate, K = age-weighting modulation factor, and ß = parameter from the age-weighting function. DALYs estimates were presented with [DALYs (0.03, 1., 0.04)] and without [DALYs (0.0,0.04)] age weighting and discounting (18).

Costs
We included screening, confirmation, treatment costs from industry sources, academicians, and the Government of India website (http://www.nppaindia.nic.in/). Cost data are presented in the Supplementary Information. Costs for screening tests were obtained from two resources—Medplus Labs and Genes n’ Life labs, two private sector labs. These costs were cross checked with nationally funded pilot project costs and also correlated well with inflation-adjusted costs for screening in the United States and recent region-specific literature (20, 21). Screening costs included supplies for sample collection, consumables, logistics, assay, labor, overhead costs, and confirmation assay. Clinical care costs included annual physician visits, annual laboratory testing, and medications. Frequency of testing and physician visits were modeled as per clinical practice guidelines recommended by the Indian Society of Pediatric and Adolescent Endocrinology for newborn screening for primary CH (22, 23).

Economic Value of Lost Disability-Adjusted Life Years
Human Capital Approach
Using the human capita (HC) approach, we estimated lost productivity from three values—number of disabilities, number of DALY losses, and gross national income per capita (GNI) (24). GNI per capita is an estimate of average individual productivity to the national economic output in a given year. Monetizing the number of DALYs lost from a specific cause can be used as proxy...
for non-productive years from an individual perspective that reflects the lost opportunity of significant domestic productivity of a developing country. DALY losses with 95% uncertainty levels were used in the calculations, and sensitivity analysis was done with different discount rates (3%, 5%, 7%) and assumed reductions in morbidity to estimate the present value of future benefits. We modeled these estimates as follows:

Based on the total number of disabilities, YLD lost was calculated using a life expectancy of 67 years. We used GNI per capita (PPP—purchasing power parity method) to estimate the total economic value of estimated disabilities. Economic losses were calculated from monetizing lost DALYs and multiplying these life years with GNI per capita. Based on clinical evidence, we assumed that there would be no mortality from CH (YLL), and total YLD reflect total DALY (Table 3).

Economic productivity loss = DALY lost × GNI per capita × discount factor

Value of Statistical Life Approach
The value of monetized DALY is based on the value of statistical life (VSL), derived from VSL as described elsewhere (25). VSL reflects individuals' willingness to pay (WTP) for a reduction in mortality and morbidity, and we followed recent reference case benefit cost analysis guidelines to calculate the value of morbidity reductions (26). We used this method to determine ranges of three VSL estimates in a standardized sensitivity analysis as follows:

Step 1. First estimate calculated by multiplying GNI per capita by a factor 160;
Step 2. Multiplying GNI per capita by a factor of 100;
Step 3. Extrapolate VSL from a US estimate to India using an elasticity of 1.5 using the formula: VSLIndia = VSLUSA × (GNIIndia/GNIUSA)1.5

Then, we obtained VSLY, which mirrors and individual's WTP. A constant VSLY was derived from a standard, population-averaged, country-specific VSL estimate by dividing life expectancy at the average adult population age, which is equivalent to one half of life expectancy at birth as a rough proxy. This constant VSLY is considered as an indirect estimate of monetized lifetime value of a DALY. Finally, we measured the lifetime economic productivity gains by multiplying VSLY with the number of lost DALYs and sensitivity analysis done for estimated reductions in morbidity (Table 4). All costs and benefits are presented in United States Dollars (USD).

RESULTS
Prevalence of Congenital Hypothyroidism and Its Sequelae
Our random effects meta-analyses (Table 2) show the pooled estimate of incidence of congenital hypothyroidism in newborns at 1 in 1,387 (95% CI: 1 in 1,165, 1 in 1,714). This estimate translated to 72 (95% CI: 58, 85) cases per 100,000 live births. There was marked heterogeneity in incidence of CH in different geographical regions among the included studies (I² = 56%). We determined that, out of 26 million births in the year 2018, 17,412

| TABLE 2 | Pooled estimate for incidence of hypothyroidism in India. |
| References | Incidence |
| (6, 10, 27–33) | 1 in |
| 95% CI |
| Desai et al. (27) | 2,481 | 1,222 | 20,095 |
| Desai et al. (29) | 2,804 | 1,696 | 8,093 |
| Rama Devi and Nauasad, (29) | 1,700 | 1,064 | 4,223 |
| Sanghvi and Dewakar, (10) | 500 | 275 | 2,749 |
| Khoshore et al., (30) | 1,042 | 719 | 1,893 |
| Sudha et al., (31) | 900 | 673 | 1,357 |
| Kaur et al. (32) | 1,400 | 959 | 2,594 |
| ICMR Chennai (33) | 727 | 531 | 1,155 |
| ICMR Delhi (34) | 1,141 | 793 | 2,032 |
| ICMR Hyderabad (34) | 1,383 | 918 | 2,800 |
| ICMR Kolkata (34) | 1,255 | 842 | 2,460 |
| ICMR Mumbai (34) | 1,544 | 1,000 | 3,382 |
| Verma et al. (9) | 1,706 | 1,429 | 2,117 |
| Verma et al. (33) | 1,486 | 899 | 4,268 |
| Point Estimate with 95% CI (I² = 56%) | 1,388 | 1,166 | 1,714 |

| TABLE 3 | Severity of congenital hypothyroidism (CH) morbidity. |
| Severity of CH | Expected No of Infants with Sequelae (Range) |
| Model 1 | Model 2 |
| Mild ID | 6,964 (5,637–8,292) | 4,701 (3,805–5,597) |
| Moderate ID | 4,354 (3,523–5,182) | 369 (295–435) |
| Severe ID | 2,611 (2,114–3,109) | 330 (267–393) |
| Total | 13,929 (11,275–16,584) | 5,397 (4,369–6,426) |

ID, Intellectual Disability.

Estimated Disability-Adjusted Life Years Loss
Considering the average estimate of affected CH cases with neurological sequelae, the net DALYs lost in Model 1, with and without discounting or age weighting were 194,076 and 410,267 respectively. Model 2 estimates ranged from 57, 640 and 121, 849 with and without discounting, respectively (Table 4).
TABLE 4 | Lost disability adjusted life years (DALYs) from CH related intellectual disability.

| Model | Lost DALY (0,0,0.4)* | Mild ID | Moderate ID | Severe ID | Total |
|-------|----------------------|---------|-------------|-----------|-------|
|       |                      | (117, 153-63, 520) | (103, 038-151, 538) | (117,88-173, 388) | (332,087-488,446) |
| Model 1 | Lost DALY (0.03,1,0.04)* | 64,972 | 60,211 | 68,589 | 194,076 |
| Model 2 | Lost DALY (0,0,0.4)* | 92,710 | 10,692 | 18,847 | 121,849 |
| Model 2 | Lost DALY (0.03,1,0.04)* | 43,856 | 5,058 | 8,726 | 57,640 |

*Disability-adjusted life year representation DALY (r,K,b) is used to describe the results where r, discount rate; K, age weighting modulation factor; b, parameter from age-weighting function; Ranges were given in brackets; ID, Intellectual disability; CH, Congenital hypothyroidism.

TABLE 5 | Estimated lost economic productivity—human capital method.

| DALYs (Range) | Lost Productivity in USD (Range) |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Model 1       | $1,133,817,984 (917,758,954–1,349,874,250) |
|               | $788,300,083 (597,610,482–878,987,884) |
|               | $553,725,062 (448,207,861–659,240,913) |
| Benefit-Cost Ratio | 6 (4.8–7.1) |
| DALYs (0.03,1,0.04) | $536,350,374 (434,143,786–638,556,963) |
|               | $349,251,407 (282,698,279–415,804,534) |
|               | $261,938,555 (212,023,709–311,853,401) |
| Benefit-Cost Ratio | 2.8 (2.3–3.4) |
| Model 2       | $336,743,114 (272,572,090–400,908,611) |
|               | $219,274,586 (177,488,803–261,056,770) |
|               | $159,294,480 (128,941,751–189,649,972) |
| Benefit-Cost Ratio | 1.8 (1.5–2.2) |
| DALYs (0.03,1,0.04) | $103,726,638 (83,962,070–123,493,005) |
|               | $77,794,978 (62,971,553–92,619,754) |
| Benefit-Cost Ratio | 1.1 (0.9–1.4) |

Cost Per Case Detected

At incidences of 1:1,165, 1:1,387, and 1:1,714, the cost to detect each primary CH case is $9,050, $10,775, and $13,312, respectively. For countrywide CH screening and subsequent management, it costs approximately $187 million (range $184–$190 million) annually.

Economic Benefits

Using the HC approach, Model 1 and Model 2 estimates of the economic benefits of reducing undiscounted DALYs lost due to CH were $1.1 billion (range: $917 million to $1.3 billion) and $336 million ($272 million to $400 million), respectively. With discounting, they ranged from $134 to $368 million and $128 to 189 million (Table 5). Using standardized sensitivity analysis, values of VSL ranged from $347,634 to $1.02 million, and values of VSLY estimates ranged from USD $5,189 to $15,348 (Table 6).

Estimated net monetary benefits were $338 million (range $249–448 million) and $819 million (range 639–1 billion) from HC and VSL methods, respectively. Using the same econometric methods, benefit–cost ratios from HC methods ranged from 2.8 (95% CI: 2.3, 3.4) to 6 (95% CI: 4.8,7.1) when evaluated with discounted benefits and costs at 3% over a lifetime. Benefit–cost ratios were much higher ranging from 10.7 to 31.7 when VSL methodology was used to monetize lost DALYs. Overall, our analysis revealed newborn screening costs $457 (range: $389–$556) per DALY averted.

DISCUSSION

This study confirms pooled prevalence rate of CH at 7 per 10,000 live births, comparable with other subnational studies and worldwide prevalence rates. Our population model predicts the present value of future benefits, if uniform national screening, implemented at an expense of $187 million, outweighs the costs incurred. We estimate that the costs incurred to avert loss of a DALY remain at $457–$966, which is less than the one-time GDP per capita and cost effective as per WHO—CHOICE guidelines (35).

Now in the sixth decade, universal newborn screening for different disorders reduced significant disease burden in terms of morbidity and mortality worldwide. In the last decade, after extensive preparatory and execution phases to test the feasibility and collect data after newborn screening across five regions covering >100,000 newborns, a large collaborative study (34) from the Indian Council of Medical Research has recommended universal newborn screening for CH with an estimated overall
TABLE 6 | Estimated lost economic productivity—value of statistical life method.

| VSL<sup>a</sup> | VSLY<sup>b</sup> | DALYs (0.0, 0.04) | DALYs (0.3, 1, 0.04) | Range | Benefit-Cost Ratio | DALYs (0.0, 0.04) | DALYs (0.3, 1, 0.04) | Range | Benefit-Cost Ratio |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------|-----------------|
| VSL<sub>USD</sub> | 1,028,320 | 30,696 | $12,593,604,819 | $5,957,380,069 | 31.7–67.1 | $3,740,291,453 | $1,769,324,322 | 9.4–19.9 |
| VSL<sub>USD</sub> | 642,700 | 19,185 | $7,871,003,012 | $3,723,362,543 | 19.8–41.9 | $2,337,682,158 | $1,105,827,701 | 5.8–12.4 |
| VSL<sub>USD</sub> | 347,634 | 10,377 | $4,257,397,850 | $2,013,953,706 | 10.7–22.6 | $1,264,444,059 | $598,138,315 | 3.1–6.7 |

<sup>a</sup>Value of statistical life (VSL): Country level population average value of VSL estimate using GNI per capita and assumed income elasticity-based on GNI- India: $6,427(2018); GNI-USA: $57,900 (2017).

<sup>b</sup>Value of statistical life year (VSLY): A constant VSLY averages health status over lifetime.

<sup>c</sup>This VSL is extrapolated from US estimate to India using an income elasticity of 1.5. This option is preferred as it takes the efforts taken to reduce mortality and morbidity risk in low and middle income countries.

<sup>d</sup>Productivity calculated from monetized DALYs using VSLY over life time.

prevalence of 1 in 1,130 newborns. The same study concluded that there were significant differences in prevalence of CH among different regions and early identification followed by subsequent timely thyroid replacement therapy resulting in better developmental quotients and growth velocity.

To further support timing and initiation of therapy and the critical role of thyroid hormone on normal brain development and function, few other clinical case series (36, 37) showed that burden of disease depends on time of diagnosis and treatment even after achieving euthyroid status once the diagnosis has been made. They have shown that infants who had delayed diagnosis and treatment had lower intelligent quotient (IQ) scores, scholastic performance, and behavioral problems. In contrast, a study from South Korea concluded that IQ scores, measured by the Weschler Intelligence Scale, were within normal limits when treatment started within 2–8 weeks of diagnosis of CH. Several regional retrospective studies from India have confirmed, in the absence of universal newborn screening, the average age of diagnosis is between 3 and 5 years, and the main reasons are lack of awareness among parents, community, and even among primary care physicians, which can lead to permanent sequelae of CH (38–40). Even if treatment for CH is started before 3 months of age, but later than 1 month, to prevent loss of IQ, many of these infants show some degree of impairment in school performance, speech, and fine motor skills later (41). A recent Irish longitudinal study (42) showed that rates of hypothyroidism in infants that were treated were 1 per 1,000 live births. If we apply that rate to 26 million births in India, we can expect around 26,000 infants that would need treatment, which is within the range of our modeling estimates.

Another recent Government-sponsored national household survey of persons with disabilities in India noted that the number of persons with onset of disability were 86 per 100,000 population, and applying this rate to a population of 1.35 billion, India suffers from significantly lower labor force participation rates, lower worker population ratio, and higher costs of disability support (43). As CH impairs optimal human development, economic losses from decreased labor productivity could be even larger than estimated. It is estimated that each one-point drop in IQ is estimated to reduce lifetime earnings by 1% (44). One study from Sweden found that even in cases of subclinical CH, testing showed an average IQ decrease by 7 points (45). Furthermore, a case series published from a tertiary referral center at the dawn of newborn screening confirmed that 65% of CH patients had an IQ of <85 and another 19% showed profound intellectual disability (46). Multiple large epidemiological follow-up studies concluded that earlier identification and treatment results in better neurodevelopmental outcomes.

Considering the history of newborn screening, a recent review (3) noted that only 29.3% of global births were screened for CH, and majority of the nonscreened infants are born in countries lacking nationwide newborn screening programs. The same study estimates that, across Asia, around 29,480 CH cases miss an opportunity of early screening and related benefits. If we consider these regional estimates, India accounts for >50% of affected newborns.

Poor health among children has remained too high for too long, despite decades of declaring agreements to reduce the burden by committing investments in maternal and newborn health. The newborn screening program promises to help in reducing health inequality, improve productivity, increase family savings, and strengthen the national economy. Saving one DALY through newborn screening costs less than $1,000, which is much smaller than VSLY and costs a fraction of gross domestic product.
Acknowledging the importance of early intervention, we aimed to estimate the benefits of newborn screening for congenital hypothyroidism (CH) in India. Our analysis, using various economic methods, took into account the burdens of CH, including disabilities caused by untreated hypothyroidism, and the potential gains from early detection. We quantified these burdens and benefits in terms of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) and expressed them monetarily. Our study, the first to assess the value of newborn screening for CH in India, provides evidence that such screening could be cost-effective.

**Strengths of the Study**

Our study has several strengths. First, we estimated the burden of CH from newborn screening data in India, providing a comprehensive view that includes the full range of impacts. Second, we conducted a comprehensive, iterative sensitivity analysis to ensure robustness of our findings. Third, we derived our estimates from published evidence, ensuring reliability and generalizability.

**Limitations of the Study**

While our study offers valuable insights, it is not without limitations. We assumed that the screening rates in the newborn population reflect those in the general population, which may not be entirely accurate. Additionally, we lacked specific financial data for newborn screening in India, limiting the precision of our cost estimates. Furthermore, the effectiveness of treatment for CH and the long-term outcomes were not directly quantifiable in our study.

**Data Availability Statement**

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article Supplementary Material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

**Author Contributions**

RV conceptualized the study, collected the data, carried out the initial analysis, drafted the initial manuscript, reviewed and revised final manuscript, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

**Supplementary Material**

The Supplementary Material for this article can be found on the following link: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fped.2022.788589/full#supplementary-material.

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**Conclusions**

CH is one of the leading causes of intellectual disability in India. Newborn screening for CH in India seems to be one of the precious healthcare intervention programs that could be beneficial to every newborn, parent, community, and society-at-large. The impact of early identification and follow-up management in preventing lifelong morbidities for CH is undisputable. Our analysis strongly supports the argument of investing in NBS programs that provide good value for money and would yield substantial financial gains for the country. In addition to being cost effective and cost saving in the long term, broader implementation of screening programs might lay a strong foundation for better, healthy future for next generation, and maintain stronger productive workforce for sustainable development of better India. As a few states started implementing newborn screening for CH, it is time to focus on adopting universal newborn screening public health policy and needed resources. Coordinated efforts between healthcare professionals, policymakers, parents, and other stakeholders, including public–private partnerships, may help in building a lasting and successful newborn screening program in India.
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