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Comparative analysis of ATMP Regulatory Frameworks

Mrs.B. Lakshmi Satya[1], M. Sai Priya[2]

[1]Corresponding author: Mrs.B. Lakshmi Satya,

[1]Assistant Professor, Vishnu Institute of Pharmaceutical education and Research, Narsapur, Medak, Telangana.

[2]Co-author: M. Sai Priya,

[2]M.Pharm. 2nd year, Vishnu Institute of Pharmaceutical education and Research, Narsapur, Medak, Telangana.

ABSTRACT: The global development and patient access to Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs)—including gene therapies, cell therapies, and tissue-engineered products—are significantly challenged by divergent regulatory frameworks across major jurisdictions. This thesis conducts a comparative analysis of the ATMP regulatory ecosystems in the United States (US Food and Drug Administration, FDA), the European Union (EU European Medicines Agency, EMA), and Japan (Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency, PMDA). The primary objective was to systematically map the foundational laws, approval pathways, and evidentiary standards of each framework, analyze their practical impact through integrated case studies, and derive strategic implications for global development. Employing a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical methodology, the research utilized a comparative matrix across six key dimensions: legal foundations, marketing authorization pathways, expedited programs, manufacturing requirements, clinical evidence expectations, and post-marketing pharmacovigilance. Case studies of landmark products, such as tisagenlecleucel (CAR-T) and voretigene neparvovec (gene therapy), provided product-level validation.The analysis identified significant convergence on core scientific principles, including a universal emphasis on rigorous Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Controls (CMC) and long-term safety follow-up. However, critical divergences were found in the legal definitions, the evidence threshold for approval (notably within Japan's conditional system versus the EU and US models), and the interface with health technology assessment, leading to fragmented global launches and patient access inequities. The conclusion asserts that realizing the full therapeutic potential of ATMPs necessitates a shift towards more adaptive and collaborative global regulation. Recommendations include promoting regulatory reliance, advancing ICH harmonization on CMC topics, and proposing a model for a "Global ATMP Development Passport" to streamline multi-regional submissions. This research contributes to regulatory science by providing a comprehensive tripartite analysis and a roadmap for fostering a more efficient, predictable, and patient-centric international regulatory environment for advanced therapies.

Keywords: Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs), Regulatory Affairs, Comparative Analysis, FDA, EMA, PMDA, Gene Therapy, Cell Therapy, Global Harmonization, Regulatory Frameworks, Pharmaceutical Regulation.

INTRODUCTION

Methodology:

Research Design: Qualitative, descriptive, and analytical comparative study.

Data Sources:

Primary: Official texts (Regulations, Directives, Acts, Guidance Documents, Committee Reports from EMA/FDA/PMDA).

Secondary: Scientific literature, regulatory agency websites, approved product databases, industry white papers.

Analytical Framework: A comparative matrix will be developed across key dimensions:

Legal Foundation & Definitions

Marketing Authorization Pathways & Procedures

Expedited Development Programs (e.g., PRIME, RMAT, Sakigake)

Manufacturing & Quality Requirements (GxP, potency assays, comparability)

Non-Clinical & Clinical Evidence Expectations

Pharmacovigilance & Post-Marketing Requirements

Case Study Selection Justification: Selection of 2-3 landmark ATMPs approved in at least two of the three regions to provide practical, product-specific insights.

Research Design:

To achieve the research objectives of systematically comparing regulatory frameworks and deriving strategic implications, this study employs a structured and transparent methodological approach. The research design is fundamentally qualitative, descriptive, and analytical. It is qualitative as it seeks to interpret the meaning, context, and application of complex regulatory texts and policies rather than quantify variables. It is descriptive in its aim to accurately map and characterize the distinct components of the FDA, EMA, and PMDA frameworks. Most critically, it is analytical and comparative, moving beyond mere description to dissect similarities and differences, evaluate their practical consequences, and synthesize findings into higher-order insights (Baxter, 2010). This design is ideally suited for policy analysis where the goal is to understand intricate systems, trace their evolution, and construct a reasoned argument about their relative advantages and challenges within the specific domain of ATMP development.

Data Sources – Primary:

The credibility of this comparative analysis rests on the authoritative nature of its source material. Primary data sources form the bedrock of the investigation and consist exclusively of official, publicly accessible documents issued by the three regulatory agencies under study. This includes:

Foundational Legal Texts: The binding legislation that establishes authority, such as the EU's ATMP Regulation (EC) No 1394/2007, the US Public Health Service Act and Food, Drug & Cosmetic Act, and Japan's Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices (PMD) Act.

Guidance Documents and Reflection Papers: The detailed, non-binding but highly influential texts that articulate regulatory expectations on specific topics (e.g., FDA Guidance for Industry on Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Controls (CMC); EMA Reflection Papers on classification; PMDA Guidelines on Gene Therapy).

Regulatory Committee Reports and Reviews: Critical procedural documents such as European Public Assessment Reports (EPARs) from the EMA, FDA Approval Packages (including clinical, CMC, and pharmacology reviews), and PMDA Review Reports. These provide unparalleled insight into the applied reasoning behind specific authorization decisions.These primary sources ensure the analysis is grounded directly in the regulators' own stated positions and legal mandates, providing objectivity and minimizing interpretive bias.

Data Sources– Secondary & Synthesis:

To contextualize, interpret, and analyze the primary regulatory data, a comprehensive set of secondary data sources will be utilized. This includes:

Peer-Reviewed Scientific and Regulatory Literature: Articles from journals specializing in regulatory science, gene and cell therapy, and clinical development, which offer scholarly analysis, critique, and historical perspective on the evolving frameworks.

Agency Websites and Databases: Official online portals (e.g., FDA's Biological Approvals page, EMA's ATMP webpage, PMDA's list of Approved Regenerative Medical Products) for tracking approved products, current guidelines, and agency announcements.

Industry White Papers and Position Statements: Publications from industry consortia (e.g., Alliance for Regenerative Medicine, International Society for Cell & Gene Therapy) that provide the sponsor's perspective on regulatory challenges, implementation hurdles, and recommendations for improvement.The triangulation of primary and secondary sources allows for a robust methodology: primary documents establish the de jure (by law) reality of the regulations, while secondary literature helps elucidate the de facto (in practice) application, challenges, and

stakeholder perceptions, enabling a rich, multi-faceted comparative analysis.

Analytical Framework:

To transform raw regulatory data into a structured and insightful comparison, this study will employ a systematic analytical framework centered on a custom-designed comparative matrix. This matrix will organize the analysis across six key dimensions, each representing a critical phase or component of the regulatory lifecycle for ATMPs. The first dimension, Legal Foundation & Definitions, will catalogue the core legislation and how each jurisdiction formally defines an ATMP, establishing the scope of regulation.

Case Study Selection Justification:

While the comparative matrix provides the structural backbone, embedded case studies are essential to ground the analysis in practical reality and demonstrate the tangible impact of regulatory frameworks on product development. The justification for selecting 2-3 landmark ATMPs approved in at least two of the three regions is threefold. First, it ensures practical relevance, allowing the thesis to move from abstract regulatory principles to concrete examples of how sponsors have successfully navigated (or been challenged by) different systems.

Integrated Case Studies:

To translate the comparative framework analysis into tangible insights, this section employs an integrated case study methodology. By examining specific, landmark ATMPs that have navigated multiple regulatory jurisdictions, we can observe how the abstract principles and procedures dissected in Section 4.1 are applied in practice. These case studies serve as critical tests of the frameworks, revealing not only differences in approval timing and label language but, more importantly, divergent regulatory philosophies regarding risk tolerance, evidence sufficiency, and lifecycle management. The selected products—a groundbreaking cell therapy, a curative gene therapy, and a pioneering tissue-engineered product—collectively cover the major ATMP categories and provide a nuanced, product-level validation of the tripartite comparative analysis.

United States (FDA): An Integrated, Cross-Disciplinary Review Focused on Manageable Risk:

The FDA's review, encapsulated in the May 10, 2017, Oncologic Drugs Advisory Committee (ODAC) briefing documents and the subsequent approval letter, showcases a regulator leveraging its flexible, agency-wide resources to manage a novel risk-benefit profile.

Regulatory Reasoning on Efficacy: The FDA accepted the single-arm, global ELIANA trial (N=75) as pivotal. The regulatory reasoning centered on "unmet medical need" and the magnitude of effect. The agency concluded that an 83% remission rate in a pediatric/young adult population with relapsed/refractory B-cell ALL, where the historical cure rate was near zero, constituted "direct and persuasive" evidence of effectiveness despite the lack of a randomized control arm. The review emphasized the durability of responses at the time of review, framing the therapy as potentially curative.

Regulatory Reasoning on Safety & Risk Management: The FDA's most distinctive analytical focus was on the novel, acute toxicities—Cytokine Release Syndrome (CRS) and neurological events. The review was characterized by an integrated, cross-disciplinary effort between CBER's Office of Tissues and Advanced Therapies (OTP, responsible for the cellular product) and the Oncology Center of Excellence (OCE, providing oncologic and toxicity management expertise). This collaboration is evident in the detailed analysis of toxicity grading, timing, and management protocols.

European Union (EMA): A Structural, Committee-Driven Approach with Deep CMC Scrutiny

The EMA's assessment, detailed in the public EPAR, reflects the structured, procedural nature of the centralized pathway and the profound influence of the Committee for Advanced Therapies (CAT).

Regulatory Reasoning on Efficacy & Clinical Design: Like the FDA, the CAT/CHMP accepted the ELIANA trial. However, the EPAR reveals a more detailed discussion on the limitations of the single-arm design and the use of historical controls. The agency's reasoning emphasized the "life-threatening" nature of the condition and the "remarkable" efficacy as justifying the design. Notably, the EU approved two indications simultaneously (ALL and DLBCL), based on the JULIET trial for DLBCL. This reflected a strategic regulatory decision to consolidate the review and provide broader patient

access from the outset, differing from the FDA's staggered approval.

Japan (PMDA): Strategic Reliance and Contextual Adaptation:

Japan's Review Report for Kymriah illustrates the PMDA's strategy of leveraging foreign review efforts while applying its own regulatory and medical context.

Regulatory Reasoning on Evidence: The PMDA's approval was based on a bridging strategy. The core of the efficacy and safety data was the same ELIANA and JULIET trials reviewed by the FDA and EMA. The PMDA's reasoning accepted these foreign clinical data as pivotal, supplemented by a small, confirmatory Japanese phase I/II study that focused primarily on safety and pharmacokinetics in the Japanese population. This approach aligns with Japan's regulatory efficiency goals, avoiding duplication of large global trials.

Regulatory Reasoning on Risk Management & Local Context: While adopting the core of the EU RMP/US REMS, the PMDA introduced region-specific adaptations. The most notable was the requirement for confirmation of the absence of replication-competent lentivirus (RCL) in the patient's blood prior to lymphodepleting chemotherapy.

Synthesis of Regulatory Reasoning:

The journey of Kymriah reveals three distinct regulatory archetypes in action:The FDA acted as an agile, integrated risk manager, using its organizational flexibility to fast-track a life-saving therapy while constructing a novel safety net (REMS) around its acute risks.The EMA functioned as a structural, precautionary architect, applying its dedicated ATMP framework to build a comprehensive, long-term safety edifice (RMP with 15-year follow-up) and performing a deep-quality audit of the product's very foundation (CMC).The PMDA operated as a strategic, contextual adopter, efficiently leveraging prior global reviews to accelerate domestic access while embedding locally relevant safety conditions and medical practices.

Synthesis: The Chasm Between "Drug" and "Tissue"

This divergence creates a profound asymmetry with real-world consequences:

Table 1: Comparative Overview of the European Union ATMP Regulatory Pathway and the Potential United States 361 HCT/P Pathway for Human Tissue-Based Therapies

Aspect	EU Pathway (ATMP - Medicinal Product)	US Potential Pathway (361 HCT/P - Human Tissue)
Legal Basis	Regulation (EC) 1394/2007 (ATMP Regulation)	PHS Act §361; 21 CFR Part 1271
Pre-Market Approval	**Mandatory.** Full MAA with demonstration of Q, S, & E.	**None.** No FDA approval of safety/efficacy required for market entry.
Clinical Evidence	Pivotal clinical trial(s) required.	Not required for market entry. May be collected for clinical validation/reimbursement.
Manufacturing Standards	Full GMP for ATMPs (EudraLex Annex 1).	Good Tissue Practice (GTP), focused on contamination and mix-ups, not process validation or potency.
Time & Cost to Market	High (€10-100M+, 5-10 years).	Drastically lower.
Market Access & Reimbursement	Needs national pricing & reimbursement post-EMA approval. Challenging for high-cost ATMPs.	Reimbursement likely under existing surgical/procedure codes, not as a separately paid drug. Potentially faster, cheaper access.

Strategic Implications:

Sponsor Strategy: A European company faces a high-cost, high-evidence barrier. A U.S. entity might develop a similar product as a "tissue" or "procedure" at a fraction of the cost and time, fundamentally altering the business case.

Patient Access: In the EU, access is controlled and potentially limited by cost. In the U.S., access could be broader and faster through surgical centers, but with potentially less uniform quality control and no centralized efficacy guarantee.

Innovation Geography: This divergence can distort the global innovation landscape. Products like Holoclar may only be developed commercially in regions with a financially viable pathway, leaving patients in other regions without access unless a sponsor undertakes the more onerous regulatory route.

Conclusion: Holoclar embodies two fundamentally different regulatory philosophies: the EU's precautionary, harmonized "medicinal product" model versus the U.S.'s decentralized, risk-tiered "tissue and biologic" model. For tissue-engineered products, the key question isn't "Is it safe?" but "What is it?" — and that foundational legal definition determines everything that follows.

Table 2: Case Study Comparison: Regulatory Journey of Tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah®)

Regulatory Aspect	United States (FDA)	European Union (EMA)	Japan (PMDA)
Marketing Authorization Holder	Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation	Novartis Euro pharm Limited	Novartis Pharma K.K.
First Submission Date	BLA Submission: March 29, 2017	MAA Submission: October 2017	NDA Submission: December 2018
Key Expedited Designations	• **Breakthrough Therapy** (April 2014) • **Priority Review** • **Orphan Drug**	• **PRIME** (Priority Medicine's) designation (June 2016) • **Orphan Medicinal Product** • **Accelerated Assessment** granted (Feb 2018)	• **SAKIGAKE** designation • **Orphan Drug** designation
Approval Date & Type	**August 30, 2017** Full approval under	**August 23, 2018 Standard Marketing**	**March 27, 2019 Standard Approval** (not

	a **Biologics License Application (BLA)**.	**Authorization** under the centralized procedure (valid in all EU Member States).	conditional) for the Japanese market.
First Approved Indication(s)	• Patients up to 25 years of age with **B-cell precursor acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL)** that is refractory or in second or later relapse.	• **Children and young adults (up to 25 years)** with **B-cell ALL** that is refractory, in relapse post-transplant, or in second or later relapse. • **Adult patients with relapsed or refractory diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL)** after two or more lines of systemic therapy.	• **Patients up to 25 years of age with relapsed or refractory B-cell ALL.** • **Adult patients with relapsed or refractory DLBCL.**
Key Review Committee	**Centre for Biologics Evaluation and Research (CBER)** - **Office of Tissues and Advanced Therapies (OTP)**, in collaboration with the **Oncology Centre of Excellence (OCE)**.	**Committee for Advanced Therapies (CAT)** provided the primary scientific assessment, followed by the **Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP)**.	**Office of Cellular and Tissue-based Products** within PMDA. Review leveraged foreign clinical data from US/EU trials.
Post-Approval Safety & Risk Management	**Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy (REMS) – Kymriah REMS Program**. Mandates: • Certification of healthcare facilities and pharmacists. • Training on cytokine release syndrome (CRS) and neurological toxicities. • Ensuring tocilizumab is available within 2 hours.	**Risk Management Plan (RMP)** with specific obligations and safety studies, including: • A **long-term follow-up study** for 15 years to monitor long-term safety, particularly for secondary malignancies and efficacy. • Enhanced pharmacovigilance for CRS and neurological events.	**Risk Management Plan** aligned with EU requirements. Includes: • post-marketing surveillance (all-case surveillance) for a specified period. • Long-term follow-up study requirements. • Measures to manage CRS and neurological toxicities.
Notable Label Differences / Regional Specifics	Initial approval was for a **single, paediatric/young adult ALL indication**. DLBCL indication approved later (May 2018). Label includes detailed **dose for DLBCL differs from ALL**.	**Simultaneous dual-indication approval** (ALL & DLBCL) from the outset. SmPC includes extensive guidance on CRS management graded by severity.	Approval closely followed EU indications and label. Requires **confirmation of viral vector absence** in patient's peripheral blood prior to lymphodepleting chemotherapy (a specific local requirement).
Significance for Analysis	Demonstrates the **flexible, rapid review** capability of the US system for a first-in-class ATMP, using existing BLA pathway with intensive OTP/OCE collaboration.	Illustrates the **structured, committee-driven approach** of the EU's centralized ATMP framework, with CAT ensuring tailored CMC and safety review, leading to a broader initial label.	Exemplifies Japan's **strategic reliance on foreign clinical data** for accelerated review of a transformative therapy already approved elsewhere, while maintaining stringent local risk management.

Synthesis of Findings:

The preceding framework analysis and integrated case studies reveal a complex regulatory landscape characterized by both significant convergence on core scientific principles and profound divergence in strategic implementation and evidentiary philosophy. The synthesis of findings can be organized into two overarching categories: Areas of Convergence, which represent shared global regulatory priorities for ATMPs, and Critical Divergences, which constitute the primary sources of complexity for global development strategies.

Discussion, Implications, and Recommendations

Interpretation of Results:

The "Flexibility vs. Certainty" Trade-off: Is the EU's dedicated regulation (more certainty) more conducive than the US's evolving guidance (more flexibility)?

Impact on Innovation & Investment: Does the PMDA's conditional/time-limited approval system de-risk development for sponsors?

Patient Access & Equity: How do regulatory timelines and evidentiary standards impact launch sequences and global access?

Strategic Implications for Stakeholders:

For Sponsors: How to design global development plans, interact with agencies in parallel, and build dossiers for multi-regional submission.

For Regulators: Insights for future guidance and international collaboration (e.g., ICH).

For Healthcare Systems: Preparing for the economic and logistical challenges of ATMPs approved under different evidence standards.

Recommendations:

Promote regulatory reliance and work-sharing among agencies.

Advocate for further ICH harmonization on CMC and non-clinical topics for ATMPs.

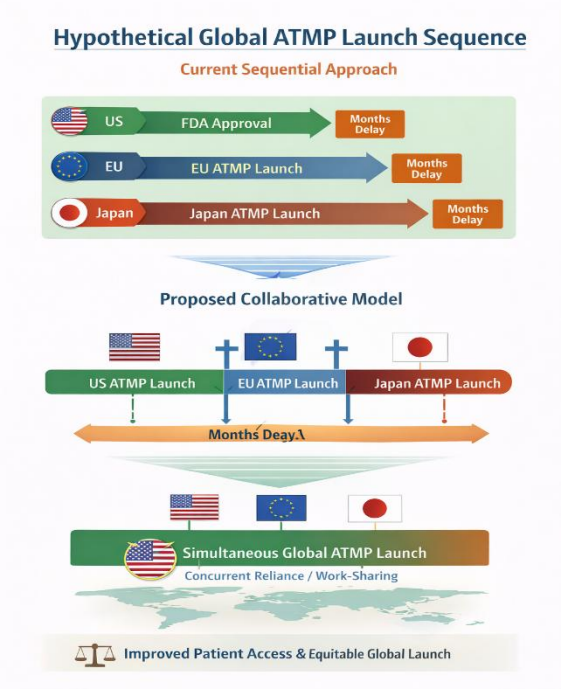
Suggest a model for a "global ATMP development passport" summarizing key non-clinical and CMC data accepted by multiple regions.

Future Research Directions: Regulation of in vivo gene editing (CRISPR), 3D bio printed tissues, and the role of real-world data in the ATMP lifecycle.This chapter synthesizes the empirical findings from the comparative analysis into higher-order interpretations and strategic insights. Moving beyond descriptive comparison, it interrogates the implications of the observed regulatory architectures for key stakeholders: sponsors, regulators, and patients. The discussion centers on three core interpretive themes arising from the data: the fundamental trade-off between flexibility and certainty, the impact of regulatory design on innovation economics, and the ultimate consequence for equitable patient access. By interpreting the results through these lenses, this chapter sets the stage for actionable recommendations that aim to bridge divergent pathways and enhance the efficiency of the global ATMP ecosystem.

Impact on Innovation & Investment:

The regulatory framework directly shapes the investment thesis for ATMP development. Japan’s conditional/time-limited approval system is explicitly designed to de-risk the later, most

expensive stages of clinical development by allowing earlier market entry and revenue generation.



Future Research Directions:

The rapid evolution of biomedical science ensures that regulatory science must continuously adapt. The comparative analysis presented in this thesis provides a baseline framework, but several frontier areas demand focused future research to proactively inform regulatory policy. These include the governance of next-generation technologies poised to redefine therapeutic possibilities and the systematic integration of novel evidence streams into the regulatory lifecycle. Investigating these directions is critical for ensuring that regulatory frameworks remain fit-for-purpose and facilitate, rather than hinder, the next wave of medical innovation.

Regulation of 3D Bio printed Tissues:

3D bioprinting for tissue and organ repair represents a convergence of ATMPs, advanced biomaterials, and digital manufacturing, challenging existing regulatory categories. A 3D-bioprinted hepatic patch or cartilage construct is a tissue-engineered product, but its manufacture via digital blueprints and layer-by-layer deposition of cells and bio-inks introduces novel CMC challenges. Future research should focus on the regulatory classification of these products—are they solely an ATMP, or do they fall under a new "engineered living material" or "biologically fabricated medical product" category? A critical analysis is needed of how current GMP standards apply to a hybrid process involving robotics, software validation for print protocols, and the characterization of dynamic, maturing tissues post-print (Murphy & Atala, 2014).

Conclusion:

Restatement of Problem, Methodology, and Significant Findings:

This thesis was driven by the central problem that divergent regulatory frameworks for Advanced Therapy Medicinal Products (ATMPs) in the United States, European Union, and Japan create a complex, fragmented global development landscape, potentially hindering patient access and stifling innovation. To address this, a qualitative, comparative methodology was employed, utilizing an analytical matrix across six key dimensions and integrating case studies of landmark products such as tisagenlecleucel and voretigene neparvovec. The analysis yielded significant findings of both convergence and critical divergence. A strong international consensus exists on the paramount importance of rigorous Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Controls (CMC), long-term follow-up, and the provision of expedited development pathways like PRIME, RMAT, and Sakigake. However, profound differences were identified in the legal foundations—with the EU employing a product-based regulation, the US a pathway-based system, and Japan a strategic conditional approval framework. Most critically, the evidence standards for approval, especially within these expedited pathways, and the interface with health technology assessment and reimbursement systems, vary substantially, leading to sequential global launches and patient access inequities.

Forward-Looking Statement on Adaptive, Collaborative Regulation:

The promise of ATMPs to deliver durable, even curative, treatments for previously untreatable conditions is one of the most significant medical advancements of our time. However, this promise cannot be fully realized within a paradigm of regulatory fragmentation. The findings of this thesis underscore an urgent necessity: the future of global health innovation depends on the evolution of adaptive, collaborative global regulation. This does not imply a monolithic, one-size-fits-all system, but rather a dynamic network of mutual recognition, harmonized scientific standards, and proactive work-sharing among agencies.

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