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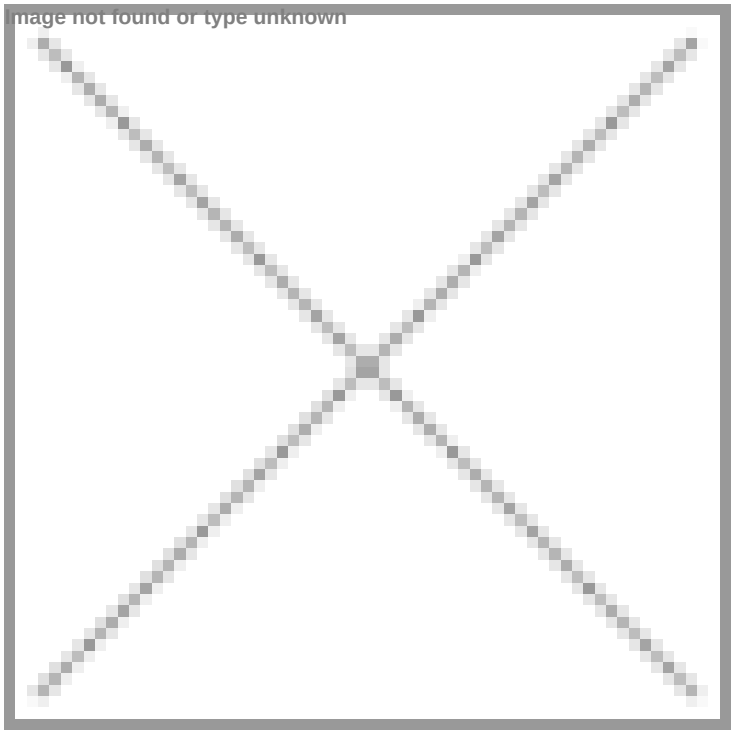
“There needs to be a collaborative effort between innovators and policymakers to create frameworks that ensure safety without stifling progress”

01 March 2026 | Views | By Narayan Kulkarni

Started in 2021, Decode Age, one of the pioneers in Longevity Research in India, entered its next phase of growth following its Pre-Series A funding round, led by Granules India. Darshit Patel, Chief Science Officer at Decode Age, leads the company’s longevity research across ageing biology, biomarkers, and gut microbiome science. Patel is focused on advancing multi-omics research, biomarker discovery, and precision-based interventions. In an interaction with BioSpectrum, Patel shares his views on translating complex ageing science into scalable, evidence-backed solutions and India’s emerging role in global longevity innovation.



Congratulations on the recent fundraise from Granules India. How does Decode Age plan to utilise these funds?

Thank you. The fundraiser has a clear two-pronged objective. First, we have an established product portfolio in India, and we are now preparing to expand into international markets—specifically the UAE and the US. Second, Decode Age has always been an R&D-first company focused on building original longevity science rather than repurposing existing global research.

Over the past four years, we’ve invested heavily in microbiome science, particularly in solving fundamental measurement and accuracy challenges. A significant portion of the funds will go toward strengthening R&D, developing proprietary technologies native to India but with global relevance, while simultaneously scaling market access for our existing products.

What makes Granules India and Dr Krishna Prasad Venkat (KVC) a strategic investor for Decode Age?

Dr KVC has been a consumer of Decode Age products for over three years, so his belief in our quality and consistency came from firsthand experience. Beyond that, he is deeply interested in what the next phase of biotechnology will look like, especially compared to traditional pharma.

What resonated most was our long-term R&D-first philosophy, the strength of our founding and scientific teams, and our commitment to innovation. His expectation is clear: continue doubling down on science and innovation, with commercialisation following naturally once the product foundation is robust.

Decode Age operates in longevity science, an area with limited regulatory frameworks. How do you approach this challenge?

Longevity science is still an emerging field globally, not just in India. Historically, regulation follows innovation—not the other way around. Innovators cannot wait for policies to exist for technologies that are still being invented.

That said, there needs to be a collaborative effort between innovators and policymakers to create frameworks that ensure safety without stifling progress. The ethical and biosafety considerations are complex, and many countries are grappling with these challenges simultaneously.

Decode Age is known for its work in microbiome science. What differentiates your technology?

The biggest issue in microbiome science today is data quality. Most failures—especially in AI and ML models—stem from poor upstream processes. Sequencing data often contains significant noise and contamination, which leads to false biological conclusions.

Over the last four years, our focus has been on solving these upstream problems—ensuring accuracy, reproducibility, and reliability before any AI model is applied. We've built end-to-end capabilities in-house, from wet labs and NGS sequencing to computational biology and clinical interpretation.

Our internal benchmarks already exceed industry norms, and the technology is now ready for clinical use. We are in the process of filing patents and will publish validation studies between June and August.

Are you currently using AI or ML models in microbiome analysis?

Not in the way most people expect. Internally, we believe it's premature to deploy AI on unstable microbiome data. Externally, studies show that over 80 per cent of AI-driven microbiome predictions fail biological validation.

The priority is clean, accurate data. Our computational pipelines use automated decision checkpoints to eliminate false positives. If a species identification falls below 98 per cent accuracy, we simply don't report it. Reporting inaccurate data is more harmful than not reporting at all.

How many microbiome tests has Decode Age conducted so far?

We've conducted approximately 5,400 microbiome tests so far. We launched commercially in 2023, but the underlying technology was under development for nearly two years before that.

Is the microbiome test developed in-house, and what certifications does it have?

Yes, the test is entirely developed in-house—from wet lab processing to computational analysis and clinical insights. We already hold ISO certifications and are currently pursuing NABL accreditation. We also plan to apply for ICMR validation.

What is Decode Age's current team structure?

Our total team strength is around 60 people. About 20 are part of the core R&D team, with the rest spread across operations, logistics, e-commerce, marketing, content, and design.

How much funding has Decode Age raised to date?

This marks Decode Age's third funding round. The company raised Rs 1 crore in October 2022, followed by Rs 3.5 crore in 2024 through a combination of Shark Tank India participation and other investors. In 2025, Decode Age secured Rs 14.48 crore in its Pre-Series A round led by Granules India, underscoring growing investor confidence in its longevity science and microbiome-led research platform.

How is the supplements business performing?

The supplements business has been our financial backbone. It generates approximately Rs 18–19 crore annually and keeps the company close to break-even or cash-positive.

We've maintained a strict focus on healthy ageing and longevity rather than expanding into generic nutraceuticals. This focus has helped us build a strong community and a loyal customer base.

Are Decode Age supplements proprietary?

Currently, we source clinically validated raw ingredients from specialised global partners, ensuring purity and third-party testing. However, we are launching two flagship proprietary, Decode Age supplements between July and August.

What sales channels do you primarily use?

E-commerce is our primary channel—our own website, Amazon, and Flipkart. We also have limited offline presence in select flagship stores.

What is your scientific view on biological age testing?

We are highly skeptical. Internally, we tested both epigenetic and blood-based biological age clocks and found results to be inconsistent and unreliable. In one case, five samples from the same individual produced a 15–18-year difference in biological age.

There is no agreed definition of biological age, and different organs age at different rates. Without foundational clarity, biological age becomes more of a marketing construct than a scientific one.

If not biological age, what metrics should people track for longevity?

A multi-marker approach works best. Blood biomarkers, microbiome health, genomic indicators, and subjective factors like energy and recovery all matter. Tracking improvements across systems is far more meaningful than chasing a single "biological age" number.

How does Decode Age ensure scientific rigor while scaling rapidly?

For supplements, we prioritise studies conducted on local populations, extensive third-party testing at every stage of the supply chain, and strict regulatory compliance.

For diagnostics, reproducibility is key. We spent over two years refining our microbiome technology before launch to ensure consistent results from the same individual. Internal QC metrics, accuracy thresholds, and conservative reporting define our approach.

What are the biggest challenges ahead for the Decode Age?

The first challenge is long research cycles—validation in biotech often takes years. Second is awareness and adoption beyond tier-one cities in India. Third is regulatory alignment; if policy does not keep pace with innovation, it can become a bottleneck.

Despite these challenges, we believe that a strong scientific foundation is the only sustainable way to build in this space.

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