INTRODUCTION

There are a great diversity of childhood disorders, forms and causes. Some of the disorders are physical and physiological, while others are primarily of the brain and its cognitive abilities. Understanding and seeing normal developmental milestones for different ages puts us in a better position to understand the deviations from the normal.

In this study, we will explore depression and anxiety, one of the most common psychological morbidities and its presence in parents of children with congenital neurodevelopmental disorders in details. The study would help us to understand its ramification in the life of not just the patient but also the primary caregiver, who are parents.

India has seen a paradigm shift in acceptance and acknowledge of mental health issues at least in urban cities, and we are overcoming the age old taboos, stigma and mind-set, however much is needed to be done for families as caregiving is not just about feeding, clothing and cleaning. It is also about understanding how to navigate a complicated relationship between those who give care and those who are in need of it.

The four developmental neurobiological conditions that will be explored and investigated are Autism, Intellectual Deficits, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity disorder & Learning disability. These disorders are lifelong and does not have a complete cure. Therapy and treatment can help develop coping mechanism and functional skills. However, the condition of each of these disorder brings new challenges to parents at every developmental milestone and age of the child. The congenital (by birth) nature of the disability makes the parents feel confused, overwhelmed, and emotionally distressed since the arrival of the baby.

Usually birth of the child with a special need is seen as an unwelcome and unpleasant event in a family. What follows in coming years are a series of developmental milestone that are missed, delayed and hay-wired. Parents face a sea of unknown challenges such as lack of awareness of the conditions, social stigma, denial, misdiagnosis, wrong diagnosis, delays in interventions, lack of medical insurance for such disabilities, lack of
proper psychological and psychiatric services, poor governmental grants and policies, inadequacy of access accommodation in the education system, school exclusion and many such events and experiences that lead to a parent experiencing tremendous helplessness and negative emotions.

This continuous and ongoing child rearing challenges may contributes to burn-out, stress, anxiety and even depression in the caregiver. The research aims to identify prevalence of mental health illness in the caregivers in order to plan better support and inclusion steps for parents and address their worries and anxieties.

The proposed research is designed to identify the presence of psychological morbidity such as depression, anxiety or both in parents of the children with neurological or cognitive deficits. The focus of the study is on identifying the distress of the parents who are care takers of children with various needs such as Learning Disability, Attention Deficient and Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism and Intellectual Deficits.

The study will provide a much needed windows into mental health status and needs of parents with special needs children. The research will enable the policy makers, to professionals and stakeholders to plan and device suitable and necessary support and treatment mechanism in place.

The study will make significant contribution both in understanding the needs of caregivers and have social, structural, economic, medical and policy based reforms in place in order to support, aid and facilitate parents with children having special needs.