



FUNDING FOR A CAUSE

Ex-students come forward to crowdfund teacher's ₹4 crore hospital bill

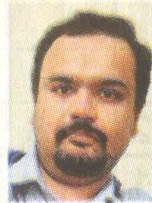
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Chennai

IN a warm gesture, hoping for a better tomorrow, the alumni of Sri Ramachandra Institute of Higher Education and Research (SRIHER) in Chennai's Porur, have joined hands to start a crowdfunding drive to gather money for the medical treatment of their lecturer, who is

suffering from a life-threatening illness. The alumni association, globally, has come together for his cause and some have donated up to \$300. They have so far raised ₹44 lakh out of the required ₹4 crore.

PA Abhinand (33), an alumna and a lecturer at the SRIHER since 2013, suffers from a degenerating Type-3 Spinal Muscular Atrophy. It is a genetic

disorder characterised by weakness and wasting in muscles used for the movement of skeletal muscles due to the loss of specialised nerve cells called motor neurons that control muscle movement. As a result, Abhinand lost his movement capacities. "Since I was 13, I have been on a wheel-



chair but that did not deter me from pursuing higher education. I did my Ph.D. in bioinformatics at Ramachandra University in 2011 and joined as a part-time lecturer in 2013. I became a full-time lecturer six years later," Abhinand told *Express*.

Despite his illness, he contin-

ued teaching and shared a good rapport with all the students of the college. "Since my condition is severely deteriorating and the treatment expense would amount to ₹72 lakh a year, I couldn't afford it by myself. As a result, the alumni decided to begin crowdfunding," he said.

As someone who taught Abhinand, Dr. V Deepa Parvathy, Treasurer, Sri Ramachandra

Alumni Association and Assistant Professor, Department of Biomedical Sciences, said he was brilliant in academics despite his deteriorating health. "Since he excelled in academics and has also done quite a lot of research studies, we came forward to support Abhinand's cause through crowdfunding," she said.

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Earn, pray, help, repeat, is what these alumni believe in

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ABHINANDAN, who cannot type on a computer keyboard but can use voice commands, said his only identity was his educational research and job and if he loses it, he would have nothing to look forward to in life. "I am hoping for the best so that I can contribute to the society through my work," he

added.

The hospital, in a statement, said Abhinandan was being treated under Dr. V Shankar, Senior Consultant, Neurology, SRMC. "Despite his movement restrictions, he has completed doctorate in bioinformatics and is also a passionate researcher with several peer-reviewed publications," the statement said, adding that while

there are three life-saving medicines approved for SMA by US FDA, only one, Evrysdi (Risdiplam) by Roche is DCGI approved and is available currently in India.

People willing to donate to the fund can do it at <https://www.impactguru.com/fundraiser/donate-to-dr-abhinandponneri-adithavarman>. Funds can also be transferred through NEFT/IMPS to Abhinand Ponneri Adithavarman (A/c 700701717155416, IFSC code YESB0CMSNOC). For UPI transaction: supportabhinand@yesbankltd.