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Bay Area Mom Creates Online Tool To Tackle Autism



Reporting
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HILLSBOROUGH (CBS 5) — The Silicon Valley mother of an autistic child has developed an online tool that helps parents track their children's progress and may aid scientists in the search for a solution.

When 10-year-old Siddharth Vembu was diagnosed with autism, his mother fought back the only way she knew how, the software developer created a program to help track her son's progress, medicines and diet.

Pramila Srinivasan made the tools she developed internet based so that all families of autistic children could start their own tracking system for free.

"He is the inspiration," said Srinivasan. "Myself as a working mom (!) had a lot of difficulty. Managing his treatments and keeping everything in one place was the inspiration for starting CHARM."

The original program, called charm tracker, was just for parents, but a new version for doctors has recently launched.

Kenneth Bock, an expert in the emerging study of environmental triggers for autism, is an early adopter.

"What we really need in this field, is really adequate data tracking, and data mining," said Bock. "I have a gold mine in my office, but it's all in these charts, it's all in these written charts."

"This is going to be like a click of the button and there it is, every medication, every supplement, every evaluation," he continued.

Doctor Bock's research is focused on how environmental toxins, nutritional sensitivities and generic predisposition could be at the root of a rising number of autism, as well as ADHD, asthma and allergies.

Charmtracker is a collaboration between two Silicon Valley families touched by autism. While Srinivasan is on the engineering side, the mother of a 14-year-old with autism is on the publicity side.

Elizabeth Nelson is making a documentary film around the research.

"There are 85,000 new chemicals in the past 20 years," said Nelson. "So you have to look at what's happening, why it's happening and not closing the doors on any potential avenues that may be causing harm."

Nelson hopes to produce a sequel, if and when there is a way to prevent or reverse autism.

For more information on the Charm, visit the website.

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