



Neurological Disorders in India

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Why in News

A recent study published in the 'Lancet Global Health' is the **first comprehensive analysis of India's neurological diseases burden from 1990 to 2019.**

- The study is a part of the **Global Burden of Disease Study 2019**, which was published by the **India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative**.
- India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative is a **joint initiative of Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** along with other public health institutions.

Neurological Disorders

- **Meaning:** Neurological disorders are **diseases of the central and peripheral nervous system**. In other words, the brain, spinal cord, cranial nerves, peripheral nerves, nerve roots, autonomic nervous system, neuromuscular junction, and muscles.
- **Non-Communicable Neurological Disorders:** Stroke, Headache disorders, **Epilepsy**, Cerebral palsy, **Alzheimer's disease and other dementias**, Brain and central nervous system cancer, **Parkinson's disease**, **Multiple sclerosis**, Motor neuron diseases, and other neurological disorders.
- **Communicable Neurological Disorders:** **Encephalitis**, **Meningitis**, Tetanus.
- **Injury-related Neurological Disorders:** Traumatic brain injuries, Spinal cord injuries.

Key Points

- **Data Analysis:**

- Neurological disorders contribute **10% of the total disease burden** in India.
- There is a **growing burden of non-communicable neurological disorders in the country**, which is **mainly attributable to the ageing of the population**.
- The **contribution of non-communicable neurological disorders to total DALYs (disability adjusted life-years) in India doubled** from 4% in 1990 to 8.2% in 2019, and the **contribution of injury-related neurological disorders increased from 0.2% to 0.6%**.

DALY, a time-based measure that combines years of life lost due to premature mortality and years of life lost due to time lived in states of less than full health, or years of healthy life lost due to disability.

- While **communicable diseases contributed to the majority of total neurological disorders burden in children younger than five years**, non-communicable neurological disorders were the highest contributor in all other age groups.
- While the **burden of infectious neurological disorders has fallen in India**, this burden is higher in less developed states.

- **Leading Neurological Diseases:**

- **Stroke, headache disorders, and epilepsy** are the leading contributors to neurological disorders burden in India.
- **Among non-communicable neurological disorders**, stroke is the third leading cause of death in India, and **dementias** are the fastest growing neurological disorder.
- **Headache is the commonest neurological disorder** affecting 1 in 3 Indians, and is often neglected in terms of public health priority.

Migraine affects females more than males, greatly affecting adults in the working age population.

- **Factors Attributing to Neurological Diseases:**

Among the known risk factors for neurological disorders, **burden, high blood pressure, air pollution, dietary risks, high fasting plasma glucose, and high body-mass index** are the leading contributors.

Way Forward

- **Planning of Neurology Services in Each State:** The study has called for increased awareness, early identification, cost-effective treatment and rehabilitation among other efforts to reduce the burden of neurological disorders in each state.
- **Headache, as a Public Health Issue:** Headaches, especially migraine, need to be recognised as a public health problem and included under the **National Non-Communicable Diseases programme**.
- **Strengthening Neurology Workforce:** There is a need to address the shortage of trained neurology workforce, and strengthen early detection and cost-effective management of neurological disorders in the country.

- **Promoting Safe Births:** Policies and practices focusing on safe births, preventing head injury and stroke would help in averting a substantial proportion of epilepsy

Source: DTE