Acknowledgments

Before I take this humble opportunity to thank all those who is one way or other helped out this dissertation, I would like to offer my sincere prayers to diving almighty for his suite but solemn benediction. It is sheer His grace that this venture has been completed.

Foremost, I would like to record my gratitude to my guide Dr. Neeraj Khullar, Associate Professor, Department of Biotechnology, Panjab University, Chandigarh, for her kind support, ever willing helpful attitude, guidance and constant encouragement without which this study would not have been possible.

This thesis arose in part out of years of research that has been done since I came to Dr. Prasad’s Genetics Group. By that time, I have worked with a great number of people whose contribution in assorted ways to the research and the making of the thesis deserves special mention. It is a pleasure to convey my gratitude to them all in my humble acknowledgment.

I am indebted to Prof. Rajendra Prasad, Department of Biochemistry, PGIMER, Chandigarh, for his supervision, advice, and guidance from the very early stage of this research as well as giving me extraordinary experiences throughout the work. I am thankful for his expert handling not only of the laboratory support for the project but more so, for the input that he provided to make me understand the necessity of each analysis and lab investigation involved, the biochemical rationale behind what was planned and what was observed and proper explanations for my observations and results, which only an experienced scientist like him could. His truly scientist intuition has made him a constant oasis of ideas and passions in science, which exceptionally inspire and enrich my growth as a student, a researcher and a scientist I want to be.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to my co-guide Dr. Praveen Kumar, Professor, Department of Pediatrics, PGIMER, Chandigarh. Right from the nascent stage when
the idea of this research took birth, through the umpteen obstacles in various forms that confronted me on the way and till the end when I had to put down the work in a properly presentable form, it was his experience and patient guidance which, despite my shortcomings, smoothened out everything to make it all look so simple. He has been actively interested in my work and has always been available to advise me. I am very grateful for his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense that, taken together, make him a great mentor.

I would like to thank the teaching staff of Department of Biotechnology, Panjab University, Prof. Jagdeep Kaur, Dr. Rupinder Tiwari, Dr. Neena Capalash, Dr. Jagtar Singh and Dr. Kashmir Singh for making my stay in the department a memorable one.

I express my sincere thanks to all faculty members of Department of Biochemistry, PGIMER, Prof. K. K. Kohli, Prof. K. D. Gill, Prof. Indu Verma, Dr. Jyotdeep Kaur, Dr. Thungapatra M., Dr. Sujata and Dr. V. S. Saha for their much needed support and help throughout my stay in the department.

A note of thanks is also due to Dr. Gurjit Kaur, Associate Professor, Department of Physiology, Government Medical College and Hospital, Chandigarh, for her available help and valuable suggestions throughout the study.

I would like to hereby express an immense sense of gratitude to the Indian Council of Medical Research for the financial assistance in the form of Research Fellowship and Contingency. It made the procurement of biochemical kits and coverage of other essential expenses involved in the project much easier than it would have been otherwise.

It is a pleasure to acknowledge my colleagues and labmates Raman, Amandeep, Deepraj, Shilpa, Vinny, Niti, Dr. Jayagandan and Dr. Kartik for giving me such a pleasant time when working together with them. I am particularly grateful to Neha for her support and for creating a stress-free environment with her witty humor.
The burden of the long and winding path of my doctoral degree was lessened substantially by the support and encouragement from my friends Bhawna, Dipti, Rishu, Jasleen, Manisha, Stuti, Nidhi, Karnika and Kavita.

I also benefitted greatly from the guidance and constructive criticism of my seniors Dr. Neeraj Sharma, Dr. Pooja and Dr. Sandeep Malik.

I would like to thank the non-teaching staff of Department of Biotechnology and administrative block of Panjab University Mr. Anish, Mr. Manoj, Mr. Ramchander, Ms. Aprajita, Mr. Pritam, Ms. Shashi, Mr. Rakesh, Mr. Sanju, Mr. Ashok, Mr. Raman, Mr. Ravinder and Ms. Mamta for the support and help.

I am also thankful to Mr. Bajaj, Mr. Abrahim, Mrs. Sunita, Mrs. Sunan, Mr. Raghunath and non-teaching staff of the Department of Biochemistry, PGIMER, for their support the tenure of the study.

Collective acknowledgments are also owed to Residents of Neonatal ICU, PGIMER.

Where would I be without my family? My parents deserve special mention for their inseparable faith, support and prayers. They sacrificed a lot for my welfare and brought me up to this esteemed stage and taught me the value of hard work. It is their exquisite benedictions, unflinching support, good wishes, love and affection that inspired to achieve success in academic in academic world.

Thanks to my loving sisters Neetu and Deepshikha and brothers Gaurav and Deepak for being a supportive and caring and my Husband Vikas for his love and being patient with me and his optimistic approach towards life has always inspired strength in me to face every difficulty as a new challenge and every stone as a stepping stone. I am thankful to them for sticking with me during the long months of writing and re-writing even when I retreated to long days with my computer.

I shall remain indebted to everybody who was important towards the successful realization of my thesis, as well as expressing my apology that, despite making a
conscious effort, I could not mention personally one by one. But, be assured that my 
gratitude is not less than for those listed above.

Lastly, I am deeply indebted to all those infants who have been silent subjects of my 
work and contributed a great deal to this work.

And remembering the words of Einstein, "I am thankful to all those who said NO, it's 
because of them I did it myself." For any errors or inadequacies that may remain in this 
work, of course, the responsibility is entirely my own.

Ritu Rathi