



VITILIGO IN PERSPECTIVE OF HOMOEOPATHIC UNDERSTANDING

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ABSTRACT

Vitiligo is one of the most prevalent pigmentary illnesses, usually first manifests in childhood or early adulthood; 50% of cases experience this by the age of 20, while 25% appears before the age of 14 years. According to extensive epidemiological studies, 15 to 20% of cases of vitiligo having positive family history and also identical twins have been found to share this concordance. Though the precise process causing the melanocyte loss in vitiligo is unclear, recent advances in study have made major contributions to our understanding of the disease's biology. The aetiology of the illness has been explained by a number of theories, including oxidative stress, autoimmune, neurochemical, and hereditary possibilities. According to studies, vitiligo is a complex, multifaceted condition that is multifactorial. Currently, the available treatment options of modern medicine for patients with vitiligo have limited effectiveness, particularly for patients with vitiligo of the acral areas, which are resistant to treatment due to the lack of hair follicles that can serve as reservoirs for melanocytes. In order to provide patients with individualized care, homoeopathic medicine incorporates a holistic understanding of the patient. Homoeopathy understands that some diseases may develop when stress and a hereditary predisposition coincide. Homoeopathy takes the patient's susceptibility to particular types of stress into account, making it more effective in treating diseases in their early stages, even before traditional medicine generally gets involved.

KEYWORDS: Homoeopathy, Vitiligo, melanocytes, etc.

INTRODUCTION

Skin is synonymous with "life" in the phrase "to save my skin"; human sensibilities are measured by "thin-skinned" or thick-skinned; a shallow person is "skin-deep" and a miser is a "Skin flint"; a friendly greeting is "give me a little skin" and an unfriendly feeling is "skin him alive"; relief is expressed by "the skin of my teeth", unconcern by "no skin of my back", and annoyance by "getting under my skin". For some the skin is merely the body's largest organ; to others, it is the most fascinating.^[1]

The word vitiligo comes from the Latin word *vitellus*, which means 'veal' (pale, pink flesh). It is an acquired circumscribed depigmentation that affects people of all races and has an incidence of up to 1%.^[2]

Vitiligo is a common form of localised or generalised depigmentation resulting from progressive loss of melanocytes. It is an acquired condition due to multifactorial etiology characterized by milky white sharply demarcated macules and patches.

Epidemiology:

Incidence and Prevalence:

Vitiligo affects 1-4% of the world's population independent of race and gender.^[3-7]
In Indian population its about 4-8.8%.^[8]

Age:

Vitiligo begins at any age but most of the cases becomes apparent between the age of 20 and 30 years.^[9-12]

Sex:

The prevalence is almost equal in both sexes. In some studies female preponderance was reported and slight male preponderance in another study also reported.

Pathogenesis:

There is a complete loss of melanocytes from affected areas. There are two main patterns: a common generalized one and a rare segmental type. *Generalized vitiligo*, including the acrofacial variant, usually starts after the second decade. There is a family history in 30% of patients and this type is most frequent in those with autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, thyroid disorders and pernicious anaemia. It is postulated that in this type

melanocytes are the target of a cell mediated autoimmune attack. *Segmental vitiligo* is restricted to one part of the body, but not necessarily to a dermatome. It occurs earlier than generalized vitiligo, and is not associated with autoimmune diseases. Trauma and sunburn can precipitate both types.^[2]

Types:

A common *generalized type* and a rare *segmental type* make up the two main patterns.

The *generalized vitiligo* along with acrofacial type typically appears after the second decade. 30% of patients have a family history, and this type is particularly common in people with autoimmune diseases such as diabetes, thyroid conditions, and pernicious anaemia. It is hypothesized that in this kind, melanocytes are the target of an autoimmune onslaught that is cell-mediated.

Segmental vitiligo is confined to a single body part, albeit it is not always a dermatome. The onset is earlier than with generalised vitiligo, and autoimmune illnesses are not linked to it. Both types can be caused by sunlight and traumatic events.

Histopathology:

Typically, vitiliginous skin lacks melanocytes and completely loses the melanin pigment from the epidermis.

Melanocytes may be present in this area and may have grown in size at the advancing border; these cells are always present if the border is clinically inflamed. In the bottom layer, these epidermotropic lymphocytes can occasionally form tiny Pautrier-like groups. In some cases, the superficial plexus is also affected by a perivascular infiltration of mononuclear cells and some superficial edoema. It's unusual to find a significant lymphocytic infiltration in the upper dermis.

Patients with vitiligo have very low rates of actinic damage and other skin malignancies, probably as a result of their usage of sun protection measures.

Experimentally, melanocytes get detached and proceed through transepidermal elimination when small amounts of stress are administered to skin with non-lesional vitiligo. This could be the mechanism behind the Koebner phenomenon's depigmentation.^[13]

Clinical features:

Sharply defined areas of depigmentation appear. The depigmented patches are often symmetrical, especially when they are over the limbs and face. Odd patterns sometimes occur, as when depigmented patches develop over the location of endocrine glands.

It is more noticeable in summer when the surrounding skin is sunburnt. It is a serious cosmetic problem for darkly pigmented people.

The condition often starts in childhood and either spreads, ultimately causing total depigmentation, or persists, with irregular remissions and relapses.^[14]

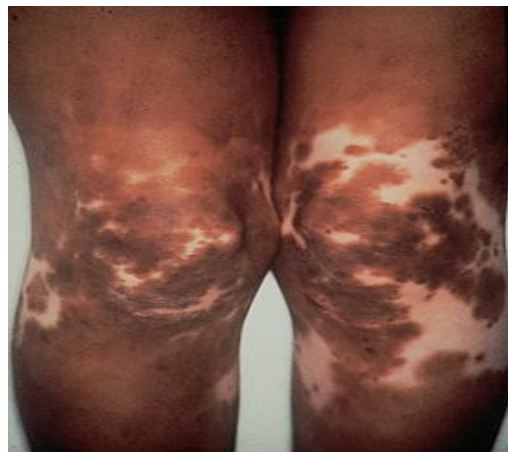


Figure: Vitiligo lesions on knees.

Homoeopathic approach:

Homoeopathy is a science of therapeutics which helps to restore the skin to health by administering of medicine based on the principle of SIMILIA SIMILIBUS CURENTUR – let like be cured by likes.

The mind, body and spirit are the trinity of life, which is present in every organism. The harmonious flow of life maintains health and any deviation leads to disease. As Roberts^[15] correctly stated that “Any disturbance of this vital energy immediately shows itself in lack of harmony through the outward manifestations of our being; in other words, symptoms. When harmonious flow is disturbed, we get sickness as a result, and it has as its base and inception, this lack of harmony in the flow of vital energy through the body, this is manifested in disease as it naturally develops because of disturbed vital force.” Disease presents itself as a signs and symptoms, which may be functional or structural. The functional changes lead to structural changes. Hence, effort is to be made to correct the disease at functional level only.

Homoeopathic treatment does not interfere with the process of immunity in the body; on the contrary, all available evidence shows that recovery from infections results from the stimulation of natural mechanisms and the conservation of bodily energy.

Burnett^[16] mentions, “I do not maintain that there is no such a thing as a skin disease of a purely local nature, such as common pityriasis and other parasitic dirt-diseases that impinge the skin, but speaking generally, I do, maintain the following points:

1. The skin is a very important living organ of the body.

2. That it stands in intimate, though ill understood relationship to all the internal organs and parts.
3. That its healthiness is conditioned by the general healthiness of the organism.
4. That speaking generally, its unhealthiness its diseases, come from within sometimes even when they initially impinge upon it from without.
5. That being biologically within the organism, being fed from within having its life from within, having its health from within, and having its disease from within it must also be treated medicinally from within.
6. That skin diseases one most commonly not merely organic but at the same time organismic or constitutional.
7. That the skin being an excretory organ, and being spread out all over the organism, is often made use of by Nature to keep the internal organs free from disease.
8. That as each portion of the skin corresponds vitally with some internal organ or part, so the skin disease is often merely the outward expression of the internal disease.
9. That, is fine, the generally received external treatment of diseases of the skin, whether with lotions or ointments or whatsoever else, is demonstrably shallow in conception wrong in theory, harmful in practice and therefore inadvisable.

If disease of the body bubbles up, so to speak, into the skin like water from a spring to treat this disease in (of) the skin by washes and ointments, or other outward applications, is really not treating the diseased state at all, but only preventing its peripheral expression?

When it is (considered) understood that skin diseases are expression of an internal turmoil, the influence of mind over body comes obviously into picture. Master Hahnemann^[17] stresses upon the relationship between mind and body in the production of disease quite a long time ago. In § 5, he points out clearly to ascertain the moral and intellectual characters, his social and domestic relationship in obvious reference to the mental state of the patient.

Homoeopathic therapeutics:

- ☞ **Silicea:** Best homeopathic remedy for people with sensitive skin that appears waxy and pale. In such patients, the patches or spots are not typically white but slightly rose-colored. There is extensive sweating of the hands and feet. The fingertips also appear cracked with brittle nails.
- ☞ **Arsenic album:** In some patients with vitiligo or leucoderma, the skin may appear dry and rough. In addition to the white patches, a person may complain of exhaustion and asthma (not in all patients). The person may show signs of extreme restlessness and anxiety. They freak out over

cleanliness and neatness. Such patients benefit immensely from Arsenic Album.

- ☞ **Calcarea carb:** This homeopathic medicine is used to treat vitiligo where the patches appear milky white in color. There may be a weakness in the bones as well.
- ☞ **Sepia:** Effective homeopathic medicine 'Sepia' is used when people with vitiligo distance themselves from their families and loved ones.
- ☞ **Nitric acid:** This homeopathic remedy is used in the case of the white spots appearing at the mouth, nipples, nose, eyes, penis, vulva (mucous junctions).
- ☞ **Sulphur:** Although Sulphur is mentioned quite low down in the list for treating vitiligo but it's worth is equivalent to above narrated medicines. . Sulphur is a deep acting medicine used frequently in treatment of varying skin diseases including vitiligo. It goes deep inside the basic root cause to annihilate the disease in its complete extent. The persons requiring Sulphur usually show a philosophical mindset. They take little or no care for their physical appearance and even show aversion to bathing. Persons who have suffered a lot from skin troubles, itchy skin with long term use of ointments are also likely to be benefited from use of Sulphur. Apart from all above said symptoms burning sensations in various body parts may be present along with white spots on skin. An extra ordinary craving for sweets may also be shown as a constitutional symptom.

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