

Health

Study: Drug Reverses Condition That Attacks Pigment in Skin

Reading

Thursday is World Vitiligo Day, aimed at raising awareness of the **disfiguring** skin condition. While the disease is not common, it is devastating for those who have it. But help may be on the way.

Vitiligo is an **autoimmune** disease in which the body attacks the **pigment**-producing cells in the skin called melanocytes. The result is big white **patches**, most noticeable in darkly pigmented individuals, especially those of African descent, but also Hispanics, Caucasians and South Asians.

"For folks who have it in publicly visible places, the face, the hands, it becomes a social nightmare," said Brett King, an assistant professor of **dermatology** at Yale University in New Haven,

Connecticut. "You know, you are standing in the grocery store line and people are staring at you, or take a wide path around you, because they think that something is wrong with you because you don't look like everybody else. It can be devastating."

But as King and colleagues report in the journal JAMA Dermatology, they successfully treated a patient with vitiligo with a compound commonly used to treat rheumatoid arthritis. The drug, tofacitinib, works to interrupt the signaling pathway that causes destruction of melanocytes.

In the study, King's research team **administered** the drug to a 53-year old Caucasian woman with vitiligo. Her face "completely repigmented," King said. "Her hands and arms, I would say 90 percent of her color had returned after five months. And then the areas on the remainder of her body — and she has it everywhere — over that period of time, anyway, were slower to respond."

But King said he was **optimistic** that if the woman continued to take tofacitinib daily, in pill form, the rest of her pigment would return.

King has approached two drug companies that make the compound to conduct clinical trials that would include African-Americans with vitiligo. He said he believed the treatment would **reverse** the devastating skin condition in all people.

What do these words mean?

disfiguring

autoimmune

pigment patches

dermatology

administered

optimistic reversed

Comprehension Questions

1. What is vitiligo?
2. How does it affect a person's social life?
3. What significant changes that tofacinitib do to one's skin?
4. How important is physical appearance to you?

Search for the similar words in the above text.

1. medicine
2. traumatic
3. associate
4. eradication
5. passage

Discussion

Do you agree or disagree?

1. Vitiligo is an alarming disease that can be considered as epidemic.
2. All victims must be put in a quarantine.

Evaluation

What do you know about this disease as what you have learned from the article?

Do you believe that cosmetic products are effective measures to solve skin problems? Support your answer.