

# TOP TEN UNCERTAINTIES FOR THE TREATMENT OF VITILIGO

By Dr Viktoria Eleftheriadou and Maxine Whitton

As you may remember from previous issues of *Dispatches*, the vitiligo project is part of an independent research programme commissioned by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) looking at setting priorities and reducing uncertainties for the prevention and treatment of skin disease. This project is being coordinated at the centre of Evidence Based Dermatology, University of Nottingham.

The aim of the vitiligo project was to identify the Top 10 treatment uncertainties from the various potential and currently available treatments for vitiligo and to submit a grant application for a large-scale randomised controlled trial of one of the treatments. There were several stages: initially, a survey was conducted to collect uncertainties about the treatment of vitiligo from patients and healthcare professionals. This identified 93 unique treatment uncertainties.

Next, a ranking exercise was conducted, which allowed people to vote for their favourite topics. This process identified the Top 23 treatment uncertainties important to both patients and healthcare professionals. Finally, the Final Prioritisation Workshop resulted in a list of Top 10 research priorities for the treatment of vitiligo. This workshop was a full day event at the British Associations of Dermatologists House in London, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2010.

The Final Prioritisation Workshop was a great success. Forty people attended: almost half of them were patients and half healthcare professionals, including dermatologists, specialist nurses, general practitioners, researchers and camouflage professionals.

We are delighted to reveal the Top 10 vitiligo treatment uncertainties:

1. How effective are **systemic immunosuppressants** in treating vitiligo?
2. How much do **psychological interventions** help people with vitiligo?
3. Which treatment is more effective for vitiligo: **light therapy or calcineurin inhibitors** (e.g. tacrolimus, pimecrolimus)?
4. How effective is **UVB light therapy when combined with creams or ointments** in treating vitiligo?
5. What role might **gene therapy** play in the treatment of vitiligo?
6. How effective are **hormones or hormone related substances that stimulate pigment cells** (MSH analogues, afamelanotide) in treating vitiligo?
7. Which treatment is more effective for vitiligo: **calcineurin inhibitors** or **steroid creams/ointments**?
8. Which treatment is more effective for vitiligo: **steroid creams/ointments** or **light therapy**?
9. How effective is the **addition of psychological interventions** to patients using **cosmetic camouflage** for improving their quality of life?
10. How effective is **pseudocatalase cream** (combined with brief exposure to UVB light) in treating vitiligo?

In addition, two treatment uncertainties were suggested as “*ones to watch*”, as these interventions

## TOP TEN UNCERTAINTIES continued

The results of the vitiligo project are being widely disseminated to both the clinical and research community. Dr Viktoria Eleftheriadou has given presentations on the Top 10 treatment uncertainties in September at the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the European Society of Pigment Cell Research, Cambridge, UK and at the First Vitiligo World Congress, Milan, Italy. Maxine Whitton also spoke about the project at the Patient Day meeting at the Vitiligo World Congress.



Five research vignettes based on the Top 10 uncertainties have been submitted to the HTA NIHR (Health Technology Assessment), an independent funding body, and are currently being considered for funding of a trial on treatment for vitiligo.

If you are interested in finding out more details about the vitiligo project, the article is published in the British Journal of Dermatology (*Eleftheriadou, V. et al. "Future research into the treatment of vitiligo: where should our priorities lie? Results of the vitiligo priority setting partnership". British Journal of Dermatology 2011, no. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2133.2010.10160.x*), which is widely available online to all internet users (free of charge).

Our next step is to work towards the development of a trial protocol based on the identified Top 10 uncertainties. In making our decision we had to take into account several factors including feasibility, willingness of clinicians to recruit patients and convenience for patients. Also, we had to take into consideration, previous trials and their results on the chosen topics.

Our team is working on the following research ideas.

- Effectiveness and safety of hand held NB-UVB devices at home for the treatment of limited or early vitiligo
- The effectiveness of topical corticosteroids compared to topical calcineurin inhibitors

Of course, it will take time for us to complete all the preliminary work needed to complete a trial protocol and we are not currently recruiting patients. However if you are interested in taking part please keep an eye on our website [www.vitiligostudy.org.uk](http://www.vitiligostudy.org.uk) as well as the *Dispatches*. We will keep you updated!

Finally, we would like to say a big thank you to all the people who contributed to the vitiligo project. We have received great support from the Vitiligo Society throughout the entire project and the contribution of patients has been crucial to its success.

We really appreciate your time and willingness to be part of this unique and important opportunity to have your say in research into vitiligo.

Please don't hesitate to contact us (Dr Viktoria Eleftheriadou) if you have any enquires or suggestions on the: [vitiligostudy@nottinham.ac.uk](mailto:vitiligostudy@nottinham.ac.uk)

**The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NHS, NIHR or the Department of Health.**