

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/dermconsult/challenging-common-misconceptions-about-vitiligo/13973/>

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Challenging Common Misconceptions About Vitiligo

Announcer:

Welcome to *DermConsult* on ReachMD. On this episode, we'll hear from Dr. Ammar Ahmed, who's an Associate Professor in the Department of Internal Medicine and Division of Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery at the University of Texas at Austin's Dell Medical School. Dr. Ahmed is here to help raise awareness of common misconceptions surrounding vitiligo. Let's hear from him now.

Dr. Ahmed:

If we're talking about common misconceptions regarding vitiligo, let's start with the big one. So the big one being there is no treatment for vitiligo, and that is false. Treatment for vitiligo has come a long way in the past couple decades. We have topical treatments, we have oral treatments, we have laser light-based treatments, and we have surgical treatments. And that doesn't mean that treatment is easy. It doesn't mean that we have an overnight cure, but it does mean that for a lot of people with vitiligo, we can help. We can stabilize people's vitiligo to better prevent it from spreading. We can oftentimes get a lot of repigmentation, so there 100% is treatment for the vast majority of people with vitiligo.

Now, the flip side to that is that there's a myth that there's a cure. Now we don't have a cure for vitiligo. We have treatments that can, again, stabilize it, that can manage the disease, that control the spread, and can, in many patients, get a lot of repigmentation as well. But I wish I had something available to cure vitiligo for my patients, but for right now, we do not have an absolute cure. If you have vitiligo, you're always potentially prone to develop more vitiligo.

Let's talk about other myths. So let's talk about diet. There's a myth that there's certain foods that cause vitiligo, and we really don't have any evidence to back up that claim. For a patient with vitiligo, I often recommend a high antioxidant-rich diet, which is basically a healthy diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables. But at the end of the day, there are no specific foods out there that we have determined cause vitiligo or make vitiligo worse.

Addressing vitiligo misconceptions starts with education. But there's multi-layers of education, right? One part of education is in the clinic room. When I or any dermatologist treating vitiligo is with a patient with vitiligo, we have things that we can offer them. We have things that we want to tell them about: this is what you can do to stop the spread of your vitiligo, to make your vitiligo better. But remember that for a lot of people with vitiligo, they're not even going to be seeing a dermatologist. And many people, they have far more points of contact with our colleagues in primary care than they do, for example, with a specialist who treats vitiligo. So part of education has to be us educating our brethren in primary care, the people on the front lines who are going to be treating a lot of individuals who are suffering with vitiligo. And those people may have no idea that there are treatments available, and we want those people to be told by their primary care doctors that there are treatments. Let me send you to our friendly neighborhood dermatologist and talk with them and see what things can be done.

And then lastly, there's messaging on a public health perspective, whether that be through social media, through the internet, or through a number of organizations. There are national, local, regional support groups for people with vitiligo. We have organizations like the Global Vitiligo Foundation that does a lot of great work in terms of messaging. All of those venues are ways that we can tell the public at large: this is what vitiligo is. It's a chronic condition. There's no cure, but there are treatments. They may be tough treatments. They may be treatments that require a lot of time and energy and motivation, but there are ways to help you if you are motivated in getting your vitiligo better. So I think that's what it comes down to. Multiple layers of effective education and public health messaging. I think that is how we clear up these misconceptions.

Announcer:

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