

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Madam,

Dr. K. Pavithran published a very interesting case report "Peritumoural Leukoderma" (Ind J Derm Vener Leprol, 1981; 47: 175). I published a case report of "Vitiligo in association with Congenital Naevus" (Ind J Derm Vener Leprol, 1976; 42: 184). My patient was having a pigmented naevus on the back since birth. He developed vitiligo over various parts of the body including a few lesions over the naevus. May I request Dr. Pavithran to highlight the factors which are responsible for this phenomenon through your esteemed columns.

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T. R. Kapur

July 28, 1981

REPLY

Madam,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 8-8-1981. Vitiligo in association with pigmented nevi of the Skin as reported by Kapur and others¹ is an interesting observation. What makes these people with nevi to develop vitiligo is unknown. Probably some form of injury to these nevi containing abundant melanin, releases the antigenic material to the circulation and thereafter the body considers them as 'foreign' and tries to destroy the melanocytes by two basic immunologic mechanisms, humoral and cell mediated. This is auto immunity. Specific circulating antibodies, cytotoxic to normal melanocytes, have been detected in the blood of patients with 'halo nevi'. The presence of lymphocytes in patches of vitiligo, histology of 'Sutton's Nevus' and demonstration of cytotoxic peripheral lymphocytes against melanoma cells, in vitiligo patients suggests a cell mediated immune mechanism for destruction of melanocytes. The development of vitiligo after burns of skin is a clinical support for the immune hypothesis. Recently, depigmentation has been noted at sites of resolution of pigmented tumours in animal models—Sinclair Swine. The development of Vitiligo in a highly pigmented area—pigmented nevus—supports the more recently put forward "self destruct hypothesis" for vitiligo.

References :

1. Bedi TR : Loss of pigment in Beckers melanosis. Indian J Dermatol Venereol Lepr, 1979; 45 : 116.
2. Millikan EE et al : Gross and ultrastructural studies in a new melanoma model : the Sinclair Swine. Yale J Biol Med, 1975; 46 : 631-645.
3. Lerner AB : Neural control of pigment cells. in - The Biology of Normal and Abnormal Melanocytes. Ed by Kawamura T et al : University Park Press, Tokyo, 1971; PP 3-16.

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