

WORLD VITILIGO AWARENESS DAY

Today is World Vitiligo Awareness Day. Vitiligo affects 1-2% of the population, making it half as common as diabetes. The cause of vitiligo is unknown and there is no known cure. It is most likely an autoimmune condition where the body's immune system attacks its own tissues.

Dr Monisha Gupta, dermatologist with the ACD says: "Vitiligo is a treatable disease and the earlier it is diagnosed and treated, the better the results."

Simone Wright, who has a daughter being treated for vitiligo by Dr Gupta says: "In the beginning I was worried because you don't know what it is until you get a diagnosis. My daughter had little pigment in her skin and it was getting progressively worse. When I found out that vitiligo was not life threatening, I was relieved."

Vitiligo is the loss of colour in the skin creating a variety of patterns on the skin from loss of pigment. The disease does not increase the risk for developing skin cancers.

Dr Gupta says: "Vitiligo is more than a cosmetic problem and impacts highly on a person's quality of life, often termed a 'stain on the psyche not merely a stain on the skin.'"

Ms Wright says, "My daughter is so incredibly resilient and she insists that she is fine, but there was a time when I could tell she was having anxiety and we changed schools. Within two weeks, she was a different child. Her friends affectionately call her their 'little cow', which she embraces. My son always tells her 'It's only skin deep, not you and your heart'."

Dr Gupta was recommended to Ms Wright by a medical colleague. She started UV light therapy on her daughter three times a week before school and the melanin is returning to her body and face.

Ms Wright says, "Dr Gupta got my daughter's commitment to the treatment early on and really wants a positive outcome. She's very professional and the nurses are very nurturing. They show her respect and dignity. It really feels like we are part of a family in her practice and have the most incredible joy that the therapy is working."

At the start it felt like the vitiligo was out of control which indeed it was, but now I feel like it's been stopped in its tracks. Although it may not work for everyone, I want to spread the word about this treatment and help others. It's been incredible for us."

The Vitiligo Association of Australia (VAA) was founded in September 2010 for patient support, public education and the promotion of research into vitiligo within Australia. President of the Vitiligo Association of Australia, Dr Adrian Mar, is a dermatologist with the ACD. Most of the committee members of the VAA are also ACD dermatologists, including Dr Gupta.

Dr Gupta says: "There is a great need to increase awareness of vitiligo and to raise funds for more research and services, and we and the Vitiligo Association of Australia are actively engaged in this endeavour."

Links to further information



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[A-Z of Skin](#)

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The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

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