

Vitiligo

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Kannada Film Tackling the Stigma of Vitiligo

- A new Kannada film, directed by Mahesh Gowda, aims to challenge the stigma associated with vitiligo, a condition often misunderstood and stereotyped in India.
- Gowda, who himself has vitiligo, not only directs but also plays the lead role in the movie, continuing his trend of making films that highlight social issues.

What is Vitiligo?

- **Definition:** Vitiligo is a long-term skin disorder that causes the loss of pigmentation in patches, resulting in white spots on the skin.
- **Cause:** It occurs when melanocytes, the cells responsible for skin color, malfunction or are destroyed.
- **Triggers:** Possible causes include autoimmune responses, genetics, oxidative stress, or exposure to chemicals.
- **Symptoms:** Depigmented patches can develop anywhere on the body, including the skin, hair, and mouth lining.
- **Prevalence:** Vitiligo affects 0.5-2% of the global population, impacting people of all ethnicities, though it is more noticeable in individuals with darker skin.

Treatment Options

- While there is no permanent cure, treatments aim to manage symptoms and restore pigmentation.
- Options include topical corticosteroids, calcineurin inhibitors, phototherapy, and, in severe cases, surgical interventions like skin grafting or depigmentation therapy.
- Despite advancements, full and permanent repigmentation remains a challenge.

Social and Psychological Impact

- **Emotional toll:** Vitiligo often leads to deep emotional and psychological effects due to the visible nature of the condition. Many people face discrimination, social isolation, and mental health issues.
- **Stigmatisation:** The altered appearance of those with vitiligo can lead to societal rejection and misunderstandings, affecting self-esteem, relationships, and employment opportunities.
- **Cultural misconceptions:** In some cultures, vitiligo is falsely believed to be contagious, or is linked to poor hygiene, illness, or even divine punishment, further fueling social stigma.

Success Stories

- **Notable figures:** Despite these challenges, individuals like former Bengaluru Mayor B. Ramachandrappa have been successful in public life, showing that vitiligo does not define one's potential.

- **Personal narratives:** Upendra Prabhu, a stock market broker from Mangaluru, shares how he has lived a fulfilling life despite the condition, though he notes that avoiding face-to-face interactions has helped mitigate some social challenges.

Reducing Stigma

- **Awareness efforts:** Socio-medical workers have worked to educate the public, emphasizing that vitiligo is non-contagious and poses no threat to others.
- **Changing perceptions:** As public understanding grows and medical science dispels myths, there is hope for reducing the stigma. Increased awareness and shared experiences can empower patients and promote social acceptance.

Conclusion

- Vitiligo continues to pose significant challenges for those affected, both physically and emotionally. However, with growing awareness, medical advancements, and efforts to dispel myths, there is hope for a future where vitiligo is no longer seen through the lens of prejudice.



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