Comparing Quality of Life in Global Vitiligo Populations

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Abstract

This systematic review compares the quality of life (QOL) of patients with vitiligo in different regions of the world. Multiple studies demonstrate that diseases that change the color of skin will have social and psychological impacts on those afflicted. QOL measurements can be objectively measured using the Dermatology Life Quality Index (DLQI), a ten-question survey given to vitiligo patients. Data from this survey has been compiled in many different countries, and have demonstrated major differences with high scores seen in Middle East and Southern Asia, and lower scores seen in Europe. These discrepancies present a serious global health problem.

Methods

A systematic review was conducted to find quality of life data of vitiligo patients around the world. This study analyzed 21 different articles from the PubMed database.

Screening Flow Diagram:

Records identified through database searching (n = 221)
- Number of duplicate studies (n = 23)
- Records screened (n = 198)
- Records excluded (n = 33)
- Full-text articles assessed for eligibility (n = 165)
- Full-text articles excluded (n = 144)
- Studies included in quantitative synthesis (n = 21)

Literature Search:

Database: PubMed
- Search: “Quality of Life”[Mesh] AND “Vitiligo”[Mesh]
  - 87 results, 7 met criteria
- Search: (“vitiligo”) AND “Quality of Life”[Mesh]
  - 104 results, 8 met criteria
  - 7 results, 3 met criteria

Results

The data suggest that there are indeed variations in quality of life in vitiligo patients from different regions of the world. Results are similar in countries that lie in geographical proximity to each other. For example, European countries tend to have lower DLQI scores. Estonia had an average score of 4.7, Italy had a score of 4.3, and France had a score of 7.2. (Karelson, Ingordo, Kostopoulou et al., 2009). It is known by many names, including “sweta kustha” meaning “white leprosy.” (Parsad) While vitiligo does not cause physical impairment, its effect on the psychological state of the patient has been thoroughly measured. Studies from countries across the globe have gathered data on the quality of life of affected individuals, but there is a need to sift through this data to find trends. With a global focus, this study examined this existing data and find similarities and differences between different cultures.

Discussion and Conclusions

The major takeaway from this study is to recognize the regional differences in how vitiligo affects patients psychologically. From a global health perspective, cost and time are major factors when providing care. If an effort is to be made to solve this problem, it would be wise to begin in an area that is greatly affected. From the results of this study, it is clear that regions such as the Middle East and Southern Asia are highlighted as possible targets for intervention.

Table 1: Graphical representation of mean DLQI scores, organized by regions.