

Vitiligo Genes?

Do you have vitiligo, or have you had it in the past? Or does someone in your family have vitiligo? If so, would you or they be willing to take part in a major research project on vitiligo?

We and an international team of scientists are looking for genes for vitiligo. Our goals are to discover the causes of vitiligo, to identify people at risk for developing vitiligo, and ultimately to find a better treatment, a cure, or even a way to prevent vitiligo.

Progress: We have found out quite a lot about vitiligo itself, for example how often it runs in families, and which other disorders like thyroid disease can run in the same families. "Inheriting" vitiligo seems to depend on several genes rather than one, and genes can result in risk of vitiligo even in people who have no relatives with vitiligo. So far we have mapped at least four genes to specific chromosomal locations, and have found indications of four others, which are now being studied further. One of these genes is involved in pigment-cell development, but is only very rarely involved in vitiligo. Another has now proved to be a common gene alteration on chromosome 17, which affects a regulator of the immune system and is associated with other immune disorders, like autoimmune diabetes and thyroid disease, as well as vitiligo. This finding will be published in March 2007, in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Anyone with vitiligo will be valuable for us to study in the next part of the program, aimed at finding all of the key genes, not just individuals who also have relatives with vitiligo. So if you (or your relative with vitiligo) are prepared to help us and vitiligo sufferers by providing a saliva sample (or in some cases a blood sample), and some health and family information, please take a moment to fill in and return this questionnaire. Your help will be greatly appreciated.

Note: it may be some time before we contact you for your sample, because this is a large study and may take a long time to complete. If you have filled in a questionnaire before but have since moved before we were able to contact you, please do provide us with updated contact information.

Please fill in the accompanying form as soon as possible, and return it to:

**Anita Amadi-Myers, Vitiligo Genes Project
Centre for Molecular and Metabolic Signalling
Division of Basic Medical Sciences (Anatomy)
St George's, University of London
Cranmer Terrace,
London
SW17 0RE**

We thank you very much for your help, and look forward to hearing from you.

Prof. Richard Spritz, University of Colorado, USA

Prof. Dorothy Bennett, St George's, University of London, UK

Dr. Pamela Fain, University of Colorado, USA