

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Is Vitiligo an Acquired Pigmentary Anomaly?

Sir,

I read with interest the article by H. Zachariae et al. (1) about autotransplantation in vitiligo. Although the aim of the authors was not to discuss the aetiology of vitiligo, I think that the following remark is relevant.

The statement that vitiligo "is an acquired pigmentary anomaly of the skin manifested by depigmented white patches" does not correspond to reality. Many authors (2-10) affirm that genetic factors are involved in the aetiology of this pigmentary anomaly. It seems that about 2/3 of the cases of vitiligo are sporadic (11), but this fact does not preclude the possible and probable hereditary character of many sporadic cases. It is known that there are cases of vitiligo in 2 or 3 successive generations; but there are also families with 2 or 3 affected siblings, whose parents were free of vitiligo.

The autosomal dominant character of inheritance of the former, as well as the autosomal recessive mode of inheritance of the latter, is evident. There are also cases where the inheritance seems to be polygenic. So vitiligo is very probably a heterogenic entity.

Finally, there are concordant cases of vitiligo in uniovular twins (7). All these facts speak in favour of the thesis that vitiligo is not an acquired pigmentary anomaly. It is an entity in whose aetiology genetic factors play an essential role. Unfortunately, there are few articles about the heredity of this common pigmentary disorder, whose diagnosis is very easy.

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### *In response to the letter by Šalamon*

In our article about autotransplantation in vitiligo, we used the definition of vitiligo stated in the latest edition of "Andrews' Diseases of the Skin" (1), without any intention of discussing the etiology of the disease. The same textbook also refers to several mechanisms (which are not mutually exclusive) within the pathogenesis, and other textbooks also offer a discussion about genetic factors. These have been proposed as autosomal dominant suspected, autosomal dominant with variable expressivity, or polygenic. I do not think that our article should

be a basis for a discussion of this matter but agree that there are rather few articles about the heredity of this common pigmentary disorder.

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