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A randomized comparative study of the effect of Betamethasone oral mini-pulse therapy versus oral Azathioprine in progressive non-segmental vitiligo

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The study was conducted to compare the efficacy of Betamethasone oral mini-pulse therapy vs. oral Azathioprine in progressive non-segmental vitiligo in terms of stoppage of disease progression, induction of re-pigmentation along with side effect profile in adult patients having rapidly spreading non-segmental vitiligo involving BSA >2%. Patients received either oral mini-pulse therapy with Betamethasone 5 mg on two consecutive days every week or Azathioprine 50 mg twice daily for total duration of 6 months followed by tapering in next 4 months. Out of comparable 28 patients in OMP group and 27 patients in Azathioprine group, 37 (19+18) completed 6 months' treatment. At the end of two months 82.3% (19) patients of OMP group had stoppage of progression compared to 18.2% (4) in Azathioprine group ($p=0.000$). But that difference was not present at the end of 6 months [85% (17) in OMP vs. 77.8% (14) in Azathioprine, p value=0.34]. Re-pigmentation with good color match was observed in 84.2% patients in OMP group and 61.1% patients in Azathioprine group. Thirteen (13) patients in OMP group has >5% re-pigmentation compared to 2 in azathioprine group at 6 months. The side effects were mild and/or reversible in most of the patients in both the groups. Our study is the first randomized comparative trial to investigate the efficacy of azathioprine in progressive vitiligo. It demonstrates the efficacy of both OMP and azathioprine in treatment of vitiligo with Azathioprine having its effect later in compared to OMP in arresting progression of the disease.

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