

**OP 51**

**Exploration of life experiences of patients with vitiligo in dermatology clinic, National hospital Kandy, Sri Lanka**

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**Background:** Vitiligo is an acquired, idiopathic depigmentation disorder of the skin. Globally, it affects 0.5-2%. Because of the changes in a persons’ appearance, it impacts on their quality of life. Therefore, it is important to pay more attention to their past physical and psychosocial experiences.

**Objective:** The aim of this study was to explore life experiences of patients with vitiligo in a dermatology clinic in National Hospital. Kandy (NHK) regarding physical, psychological and social domains.

**Method:** This was a qualitative research with a phenomenology design. It was performed through validated semi-structured interviews after a pilot study. Volunteers of eighteen patients who were diagnosed of vitiligo for more than three years, and referring to dermatology clinic in NHK were selected by using a purposive sampling method during April to May in 2019 after getting the ethical approval from Ethics Review Committee at NHK. The collected data were analyzed by using reflexive thematic analysis method in an inductive way.

**Results:** Three main themes were identified: barriers for better treatments, accepting the disease, and mental instability due to stress. Financial issues, knowledge deficits, lack of time, and family support were found as challenges to get treatment. Fear, worry, anxiety, shame, stigma and agitation led to stressful life. Adaptation behaviors were followed to overcome the physical discomforts. Acceptance of the disease were mainly through spiritual considerations and seeking new information about vitiligo.

**Conclusion:** Suffering with stress and social isolation, stigma, marriage, and job related social problems were more prominent than white skin patches. Understanding these problems are very crucial in caring these patients. It is necessary to combine psychotherapy with routine skin treatments in vitiligo patients.