

Book Review

Vitiligo: Nutritional Therapy

Written by Leopoldo F. Montes, MD, MS, FRCPC
©1999, Westhoven Press, Buenos Aires, Argentina. 166 pages.

A review by Lisa B. Travis, BS; Nanette B. Silverberg, MD

In *Vitiligo: Nutritional Therapy*, Dr. Leopoldo F. Montes presents his nutritional approach to the management of vitiligo. Although double-blind studies are not mentioned, this book provides the author's extensive knowledge and experience in treating many patients with vitiligo in his native Argentina. The high incidence of vitiligo in Buenos Aires has allowed Montes to gauge the results of nutritional therapy on a large scale. This 2-part book, appropriate for dermatologists and patients alike, is a well-written summary of his literature research and expansive experience in treating vitiligo.

Part 1, "Current Knowledge," is a brief overview of vitiligo in its various aspects, including etiology, pathology, diagnosis, and treatment. Montes effectively summarizes the proposed etiologies of melanocyte destruction, the data on which they are based, the clinical course of the disease, and the therapeutics most often used. He also describes the uncommon techniques that he uses in diagnosing vitiligo and in treating patients with the disease. He emphasizes the importance of performing a biopsy both before and during treatment and describes skin-structure alterations made with light and electron microscopy. His protocols for patient care are novel and are worthy of consideration.

Part 2, "The Nutritional Approach," may be the strongest feature of this book. Here Montes includes numerous valuable descriptions of his patients' clinical courses. He recounts their presentations, diagnostic workups, and nutritional supplement

treatment regimens. Photographs effectively illustrate the benefits of treating nutritional deficiencies in these patients. Each of several chapters provides specific information about a particular vitamin or mineral (eg, vitamins B₆, B₁₂, C; folic acid; *p*-aminobenzoic acid [PABA]; iron) and its association with vitiligo. Information on the efficacy of various vitamin supplement preparations is very useful. Montes makes important observations regarding diet fluctuations and use of prescription drugs (particularly oral contraceptives) and their association with precipitation or increased severity of vitiligo. He also places the high incidence of this disease in Argentina into a social, environmental, and economic context. Whether his experience with patients in Argentina can be extrapolated to patients from other countries is unclear, but the disease theories and therapy concepts detailed in this book provide the basis for a new hopeful branch of treatment for this illness—namely, nutritional management.

Both clinicians and patients can benefit from reading this book. Clinicians who are new to treating vitiligo can use the book as a succinct reference for the disease; experienced clinicians can increase their knowledge regarding the relation between vitiligo and nutrition. Patients can learn a lot about vitiligo and various common and uncommon therapies, but using any of these therapies without a physician's guidance is ill advised. Overall, this book fills a noticeable void in the literature regarding vitiligo and nutrition.