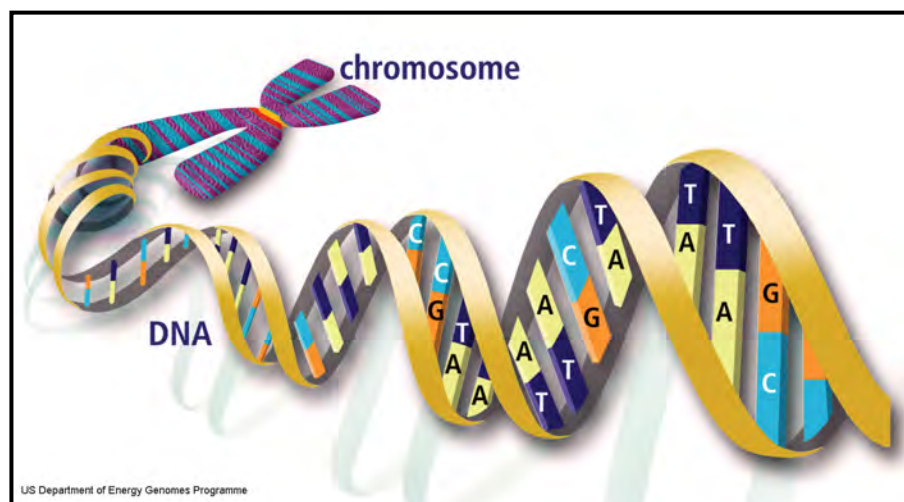


## GOOD PROGRESS ON GENOMEWIDE ASSOCIATION STUDY



As our readers know, Dr Richard Spritz of University College, Denver, Colorado, has been carrying out a large-scale "genomewide association study" of generalized vitiligo, so as to identify vitiligo susceptibility genes and thereby obtain a better understanding of the underlying biology of the disease and perhaps provide clues to better treatments.

This international collaboration, called "VitGene", includes many of the top vitiligo researchers in the world, and is funded by a major research grant from the U.S. National Institutes of Health. Stages 1 and 2 of the study, which included 5,350 Caucasian (white) patients and their relatives, are now complete but we are still accepting new participants to strengthen the findings. Stage 3, to extend the study to other ethnic groups, has started, so we are now especially seeking vitiligo sufferers from non-white and also southern Mediterranean groups.

Stages 1 and 2 could not have been done without you. This research resulted in our discovering at least 11 of the most important genes that together are involved in causing generalized vitiligo. These findings reveal key biological mechanisms behind vitiligo, largely related to autoimmunity (where the immune

system reacts against part of your own body). This provides important insights into the disease and clues for researchers to investigate and develop new treatments. I am pleased to say that a paper describing these results has been accepted for publication in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the world's top-ranked medical journal, and should appear in the near future.

To recap, we are still looking for people with vitiligo to join the study: people of all skin colours, but especially non-white, to test if the same genes are important in different ethnic groups. If you haven't already sent in a questionnaire, you can get it by visiting

[http://www.vitigosociety.org.uk/pdf/vit\\_gene.pdf](http://www.vitigosociety.org.uk/pdf/vit_gene.pdf)

(or by calling us for a printed version) Please save it to your own computer to fill in, and return it by email or post to the address on the form. **It is important to provide full contact information**, otherwise we can't use your questionnaire. Please, just one questionnaire per family. This enables all willing family members to take part, but extra questionnaires from one family may confuse things.

If you have already sent in a

questionnaire and received a saliva DNA kit or kits. **Please** send them back, and please make sure all paperwork is filled in and **signed**. If you sent in a questionnaire over a year ago but received no response at all, some information may have gone astray or perhaps you forgot the contact information or you moved. Please send in a new questionnaire, noting that you sent one in previously. (Many thanks!)

Finally, this study involves many thousands of participants. Regrets, but we can't provide individuals with personal reports of progress, genetic risk, or medical advice. Many thanks once again for your help and participation, and to the Vitiligo Society; we could not do this without you!

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**Editor's Note :** The diagram on this page is for illustrative purposes only. It is not specific to the VitGene research programme.