

World Vitiligo Day media release

Did Michael Jackson want to be white? Did he bleach his skin? It's time for the truth to be told.

The truth about Michael is coming out on 25 June, the World Vitiligo Day

It's the story Michael Jackson never told. The most famous entertainer in the world suffered from a disease called Vitiligo. And even after his death it's still one of the most misunderstood things about the king of pop. Vitiligo is a skin disorder that robs the body of its pigment. It's the reason the most famous man on the planet went from black to white.

And Mr. Jackson was not alone. Well over 100 million people from all over the world suffer from this disease. It affects all nationalities, ages and genders, every level of social strata. One can find them in schools, hospitals, on TV and movies screens, sport arenas, and churches, while many went into seclusion and voluntary isolation from society.

Vitiligo is an acquired disease characterized by progressing skin depigmentation, due to destruction or malfunction of melanocytes, cells that produce melanin. It is present worldwide, and its prevalence in different countries ranges from less than 0.1% to more than 8% of general population (~1% in the United States and in Europe), while many cases go unreported due to the current dermatology practice.

Although vitiligo daily has destroyed the lives of millions of individuals since recorded history, predominantly in the developing world, there is no cure in sight. Few diseases give rise to more fear and loathing than vitiligo, especially in dark-skinned people, in whom it can be strikingly prominent. And because it is not contagious or life-threatening, patients often receive no support from national healthcare systems or insurance companies whatsoever.

The World Vitiligo Day is a public initiative aimed at building global awareness about vitiligo. Its ambitious goal is to raise 500,000 signatures to address the United Nations in order to recognize this neglected and debilitating disease. The choice of this particular day is a memorial to the popular artist Michael Jackson, who suffered from vitiligo since 1986 until his death, occurred on June 25, 2009.

This idea was first nursed by Steve Haragadon, the founder of the Vitiligo Friends network, and further developed by Ogo Maduewesi, the founder of the Vitiligo Support and Awareness Foundation (VITSAF) from Nigeria. In early 2012, VR Foundation, a non-profit organization squarely focused on vitiligo research, has joined the group to boost and to coordinate this mass-collaboration campaign. All activities are now united on the website 25June.org.

Who is the VR Foundation?

Firmly committed to curing Vitiligo, the VR Foundation is a US-based philanthropic organization funding and fast-tracking medical research across the biomedical spectrum. With bio-IT tools, it provides a collaborative environment to bridge the gap between scientific frontiers and the patients who need treatment. The VRF has recently joined a group of biotech companies that are bypassing traditional mass-market cosmetic and orphan drug development indications to expedite product development.



(Local vitiligo support groups info here)

For more information about VR Foundation, World Vitiligo Day or general inquiries please contact: Alessandra Fabbri Palmieri; Via Vittoria Colonna , 11 - Rome; or via Mobile +39328 6214588; Email: a.palmieri@vrfoundation.org ; Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Vitiligo_Day