INTRODUCTION

Hyperpigmentation is a major concern in patients with skin of color; no melanin treatment must be well tolerated to minimize this risk. Treatment using a 4% hydroquinone skin care system plus tretinoin cream is known to be effective and well tolerated in Caucasians and African Americans; however, it has not been studied specifically in Asians. To address this, a study had been performed comparing the efficacy and tolerability of this treatment in Asians and Caucasians.

METHODS

Main inclusion criteria:
- Moderate or marked melasma (covering 26% to 50% of face)
- At least moderate intensity of pigmentation on the most severe area of melasma (deemed the target lesion)
- Fitzpatrick skin type stable over preceding 3 months
- Fitzpatrick skin type III, IV, or V
- 18-65 years old

Treatment regimen:
- All patients were instructed to use the 4% hydroquinone skin care system plus 0.1% tretinoin cream on their face every day for 12 weeks and, optionally, could continue in an extension to receive an additional 12 weeks of treatment.
- The hydroquinone system involved applying the following proprietary products:
  - Foaming gel cleanser (twice daily)
  - Toner (twice daily)
  - 4% hydroquinone cream (twice daily)
  - Emollient (each morning)
  - Sunscreen SPF 30 (each morning)
- Tretinoin 0.1% cream was applied each evening mixed 1:1

Outcome measures:
- The investigator evaluated overall melasma severity, target lesion pigmentation intensity, erythema, dryness, peeling, and burning/stinging.
- Patients evaluated the following indicators of quality of life (as “very much,” “a lot,” “a little,” or “not at all”):
  - How embarrassed or self-conscious they had been because of their skin
  - How much their skin had affected any of their social and leisure activities
  - How much others had focused on their skin discoloration
  - How much effort they had put into hiding their skin

CONCLUSION

The efficacy and tolerability of treatment were generally comparable in both groups. The differences detected in Asians compared with Caucasians were a significantly lower median erythema score at week 4, and a possibly smaller and slower improvement in some indicators of quality of life. Using the 4% hydroquinone skin care system plus 0.1% tretinoin cream to treat melasma is as efficacious and well tolerated in Asians as it is in Caucasians.

REFERENCES


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