

INTRODUCTION
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INTRODUCTION AND AIM OF THE WORK

Melasma is an acquired facial hyperpigmentation , Over the forehead, upper lip, cheeks and chin . Although no sex, race or age is exempt from melasma , It is far more common in women and persons of Hispanic origin living in tropical areas (*Sanchez et al., 1981*).

Melasma may appears without any apparent cause { idiopathic melasma } (*Perez et al ., 1983*) . However , melasma may be related to pregnancy with its typical hormonal changes . In some non pregnant women ,melasma develops during or after the use of birth control pills (*Smith et al ., 1977*) .

Oestrogen and progesterone have been implicated in the pathogenesis of melasma (*Snell & Bischitz , 1960*).This is so , because of its frequent association with pregnancy (*Snell , 1964*), contraceptive pills (*Esoda , 1963*), diethyl-besterol treatment of prostatic cancer (Ross, 1981). Also, there was an evidence suggesting the association between melasma and thyroid autoimmunity (*Lutffi et al., 1985*).

The aim of this study was to identify the possible etiological factors implicated in the pathogenesis of melasma and to evaluate the efficacy of 20 % azelaic acid cream compared to 2 % hydroquinone cream for treatment of melasma .