For Immediate Release

Cody R. Barnett, Director of Communications
M: (717) 880-7100
E-mail: cbarnett@curemelanoma.org

Melanoma Research Alliance Announces Nine Research Awards
in Inaugural Class of Dermatology Fellows

WASHINGTON, D.C., September 4, 2019 – In recognition of the critical role dermatologists can play in the prevention and early detection of melanoma, the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), the largest non-profit funder of melanoma research, today announced the inaugural cohort of nine dermatology research fellows.

The fellows, which include MDs, Ph.Ds and MD/PH.Ds, will each receive a $35,000 grant as part of a pilot program at seven institutions for year one. MRA plans to expand the program in the future. The grants will support innovative research and demonstration projects to advance melanoma prevention, detection, staging, and early interventional treatments. By investing in early career dermatologists, the program also aims to build a pipeline of promising scientists who specialize in melanoma.

"In line with its mission to end suffering and death due to melanoma, MRA is placing new emphasis on the importance of prevention and early detection," said MRA Board member and melanoma survivor Denise Kellen. "The new Dermatology Fellows Program will provide critical support for young scientists and dermatologists to explore new avenues of investigation, providing financial backing not generally available at this point in their careers."

Since its founding in 2007, MRA has directly invested more than $110 million in research. Research supported by MRA has helped usher in a new era in melanoma treatment with 12 new FDA approved options this decade. The Dermatology Fellows Program is part of a broader effort by MRA to leverage the success seen in melanoma treatment to include prevention and early detection of the disease.

"We've helped make impressive progress in advancing treatments for melanoma, but until now, less focus has been placed on prevention and detection," said MRA President & CEO Michael Kaplan. "We have a real opportunity here to change the status quo – preventing more melanomas and in detecting the disease at a much earlier stage, making it much easier to treat."

This push into prevention and early detection is timely due to the increasing rates of new melanomas. This year in the United States alone, more than 96,000 people will be diagnosed with melanoma and over 7,000 people will succumb to the disease. While new treatments have helped reduce deaths due to melanoma, the rate of new melanomas being diagnosed in the United States continue to climb.

"MRA has been a catalyzing force in melanoma research over the last decade, and has spurred dramatic results for patients," says MRA Chief Science Officer, Marc Hurlbert, PhD. "Now, we look forward to deepening our partnerships with dermatologists and other stakeholders to do the same for early detection and prevention."

2019 Dermatology Fellow Award Recipients:

Development of an enhanced telemedicine-based melanoma diagnostic platform
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Shirin Bajaj, New York University School of Medicine

Dependence of metastasizing melanoma cells on different NAD kinase isoforms
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Maria Graciela Cascio, Joan & Sanford I. Weill Medical College of Cornell University

Metastatic origin and adjuvant therapeutic efficacy of stage III melanoma
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Sixue Liu, University of California, Los Angeles

Melanoma Staging by Artificial Intelligence
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Enrica Quattrocchi, Mayo Clinic

Differentiating Change Over Time In Melanoma As Compared To Benign Nevi
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Ofer Reiter Agar, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Exploring differential PARP1 expression for non-invasive melanoma diagnosis
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Aditi Sahu, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Transcriptional profiling and marker identification of early stage melanoma
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Qi Sun, New York University School of Medicine

Determining the Immune Inhibitory Landscape in Melanoma
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Matthew Vesely, Yale University

Rac1-Interacting Proteins as Diagnostic Biomarkers for Melanoma
MRA Dermatology Fellow Award
Carl Winge, Stanford University School of Medicine

###

About Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA)

Founded in 2007 under the auspices of the Milken Institute, with the generous support of Debra and Leon Black, the Melanoma Research Alliance exists to accelerate treatment options and find a cure for melanoma. As the largest nonprofit funder of melanoma research, it has dedicated over $110 million and leveraged an additional $200 million towards its mission. Through its support, MRA has championed revolutions in immunotherapy, targeted therapies, novel combinations and diagnostics. Due to the ongoing support of its founders, 100 percent of donations to MRA go directly to its melanoma research program. MRA's ability to fund wide-ranging research in melanoma is amplified by unique collaborations and partnerships with individuals, private foundations, and corporations. Visit http://www.CureMelanoma.org for more information.