For Immediate Release

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Melanoma Research Alliance Announces $13 Million in Grants to Advance Melanoma Prevention, Detection & Treatment

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 19, 2022 – Coinciding with Melanoma Awareness Month, the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), the largest non-profit funder of melanoma research, today announced funding for 27 research grants totaling $13,046,774 to support new research aimed at advancing melanoma prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer and the fifth most common cancer in the United States.

The grants will support 11 Team Science Awards, 10 Young Investigator Awards, and 6 Pilot Awards. MRA grant awards back development of innovative ideas that offer the promise of rapidly improving outcomes for melanoma patients.

This year's grant awards focus on a variety of approaches, including the use of novel cellular barcodes to identify causes – and possible treatments – of resistant disease; research focused on rare melanoma subtypes ways to improve response to existing checkpoint immunotherapies; and two pilot awards co-funded with the Michael J. Fox Foundation to study the connection between melanoma and Parkinson's Disease.

"These scientific proposals selected this year for funding by MRA's expert Grant Review Committee are exceptional," said MRA Chief Executive Officer Marc Hurlbert, PhD. "We are at a pivotable moment in the fight against melanoma. We are thrilled to support this critical work with the hope of benefiting all patients and families dealing with melanoma, and preventing countless more from having to do so."

2022 Melanoma Research Alliance Grant Awards

Team Science Awards

Targeting Oncogenic Gaq in Uveal Melanoma
MRA Team Science Award
Boris Bastian, MD, The University of California, San Francisco

Identification & Validation of Novel Druggable Targets in Mucosal Melanoma
MRA Team Science Award
Genevieve Boland MD, PhD, Massachusetts General Hospital

Targeting Epigenetics to Enhance Anti-Melanoma Immunity
Leveraged Finance Fights Melanoma – MRA Team Science Award
Marcus Bosenberg MD, PhD, Yale University

Targeting RNA Processing to Enhance Mucosal Melanoma Immunotherapy
MRA Team Science Award
Rotem Karni PhD, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Harnessing B Cell Checkpoints in Melanoma
MRA Team Science Award, collaboratively funded by Brigham and Women's Hospital and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center
Vijay Kuchroo DVM, PhD, Brigham and Women's Hospital, Inc.

Targeting Chromothripsis to Suppress Metastasis and Therapy Resistance
MRA Team Science Award
Roger Lo MD, PhD, The University of California, Los Angeles

Cellular Barcoding to Define Melanoma Drug Resistance and Cell of Origin
MRA Team Science Award for Women in Melanoma Research
Elizabeth E. Patton PhD, University of Edinburgh

Identifying Public Neoantigens, their TCRs and their Rules of Engagement
MRA Team Science Award
Yardena Samuels PhD, Weizmann Institute of Science

Improving Immunological Memory During Anti-PD-1 Immunotherapy
MRA Team Science Award, collaboratively funded by Harvard Medical School and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Arlene Sharpe MD, PhD, Harvard Medical School

Noninvasive Prediction of Severe Toxicity from Immune Checkpoint Blockade
MRA Team Science Award, collaboratively funded by Yale University, Washington University, and Stanford University
Mario Sznol MD, Yale University

Team Science Academic-Industry Partnership Award

Analytical and Clinical Validation of a Multiplex IF Biomarker for Anti-PD1
MRA Team Science Academic-Industry Partnership Award
Janis Taube MD, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Young Investigator Awards

New Genetic Tools to Understand the Role of M6A in Melanomagenesis
MRA Young Investigator Award
Claudio Alarcon PhD, Yale University, School of Medicine

Decipher the Epigenetic Code Regulating Cellular Dynamics in Acral Melanoma
MRA Young Investigator Award
Junyue Cao PhD, The Rockefeller University

Targeting Anti-Tumor Immunity in Anatomically Distinct Mucosal Melanomas
MRA Young Investigator Award for Women in Melanoma Research
Kasey Couts PhD, University of Colorado Denver

Investigating Lipid Kinase Pip4k2c in Regulating Anti-Tumor Immunity
Bristol Myers Squibb – MRA Young Investigator Award
Karen Dixon PhD, Brigham and Women's Hospital

Mechanisms and Relevance of Treg Expansion after PD-1 Blockade in Melanoma
Bristol Myers Squibb – MRA Young Investigator Award
Francesco Marangoni PhD, The University of California, Irvine

Interfering with Early Cell State Transitions to Prevent Drug Tolerance
The Wayne Stinchcomb Big Orange Melanoma Foundation – MRA Young Investigator Award
Florian Rambow PhD, Essen University Hospital

Interrogating Epigenetic Regulation of PD1 in Melanoma-Infiltrating T Cells
Leveraged Finance Fights Melanoma – MRA Young Investigator Award in memory of Michael Konigsberg
Debattama Sen PhD, Massachusetts General Hospital

Tumor-Stroma Metabolic Crosstalk in Melanoma Brain Metastases
Tara Miller Melanoma Foundation – MRA Young Investigator Award
Inna Smalley PhD, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute

Investigating the role of FGL1/LAG-3 Axis in Melanoma Immunity
Bristol Myers Squibb – MRA Young Investigator Award
Jun Wang PhD, New York University School of Medicine

mRNA-Based Re-Programming of Terminally Differentiated TILs
MRA Young Investigator Award
Yochai Wolf PhD, The Sheba Fund for Health Service and Research

Pilot Awards

A Strategy to Identify the Basis of Melanoma and Parkinson's Comorbidity
The Michael J. Fox Foundation – MRA Pilot Award
Deanna L. Benson PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Investigating ARID2 as a Suppressor of Melanoma Metastasis
MRA Pilot Award for Women in Melanoma Research
Emily Bernstein PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Combined Intrathecal Immunotherapeutic Strategies for Melanoma LMD
MRA Pilot Award
Sherise Ferguson MD, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

Novel Mouse Models of Uveal Melanoma
MRA Pilot Award
Florian Karreth PhD, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, Inc

The Role of APC Mutations in Melanoma Brain Metastasis
Leveraged Finance Fights Melanoma – MRA Pilot Award
James Robinson PhD, The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Alpha-Synuclein's Role in Melanoma Formation and Metastasis
The Michael J. Fox Foundation – MRA Pilot Award
Vivek Unni MD, PhD, Oregon Health & Science University

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About Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA)

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 $143 million and leveraged an additional $417 million in collaborative and follow-on funding 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.

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