

Melanoma Research Alliance

October 4, 2013

MELANOMA ADVANCES FRONT AND CENTER AT EUROPEAN CANCER CONGRESS MEETING

Advances in melanoma research have again featured prominently at a leading medical conference. The European Cancer Congress (ECC) 2013 Meeting, held September 27 – October 1 in Amsterdam, highlighted research progress in multiple approaches to treating melanoma. The meeting is Europe's main multidisciplinary and multi-professional oncology meeting.

Immunotherapies and combinatorial approaches to treating cancer, and melanoma specifically, were front and center at the meeting, with significant data released on several different approaches. Suzanne Topalian, MD, Johns Hopkins University, and Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) Scientific Advisory Panel Chair, delivered the meeting's opening lecture, titled "Mobilising the Immune System to Treat Cancer." Multiple MRA-funded investigators presented research and led sessions during the conference.

Key findings presented at this year's meeting included results from a long-term follow up study of patients treated with ipilimumab (Yervoy), which was approved for the treatment of metastatic melanoma in the U.S. in 2011. The study, presented by MRA-funded investigator Dr. Stephen Hodi of Harvard Medical School, found that 22% of patients studied who were treated with Yervoy exhibited a durable response, and were still alive after three years on the treatment. Researchers also identified a survival plateau after three years of treatment, providing encouraging evidence that those who respond well to the drug could hope for survival to 10 years and beyond. While these results are positive news in the battle against melanoma, work must continue, as the majority of melanoma patients do not exhibit this type of positive, sustained response.

Other melanoma highlights from the meeting included additional encouraging data on combinatorial approaches to treating melanoma—including BRAF inhibitors in combination with MEK inhibitors—data on improved methods of predicting a treatment's efficacy from early readouts in clinical trials, as well as further insight into the genetics behind melanoma and the differences between subtypes of the disease. These advances hold the potential to make melanoma drug development more efficient, and to produce more effective treatments for patients more quickly.

The ECC headlines, combined with the recent approval of two new, genetically-targeted melanoma treatments and encouraging data shared at prior meetings, have established 2013 as another banner year for progress in melanoma research. MRA is poised to build on this momentum and is working to accelerate the pace of discovery in the field. The organization recently announced its 2013-2014 Request For Proposals, planning to award at least \$8 million in grant awards to researchers investigating the deadly skin cancer.

For more information about the meeting, visit: <http://eccamsterdam2013.ecco-org.eu/>