

MRA 2022 Scientific Retreat – Evaluation Report

The MRA Annual Scientific Retreat took place in person and virtually on March 9–11, 2022. The Scientific Retreat included 344 registrants – with 93% attending in person. More than 12% of event participants joined from outside the United States (Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Mexico, Netherlands, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom).

Post-retreat evaluation surveys were distributed online using Survey Monkey and completed by 168 individuals. While respondents had the option for anonymity, 46% provided their name. A retreat agenda has been appended to this report.

	Registrants	Respondents
Academic Researcher	200	99
Industry/Pharma Representative	60	26
Non-profit / Foundation Representative	19	12
Patient or Patient Advocate	26	22
MRA Staff or Board Member	16	2
Federal Government Employee	12	4
Other	11	3

“It was great to be in person again! MRA, the greater melanoma community, and most importantly the research did not miss a beat over the last two years.”

– 2022 Evaluation Comment



2022 SCIENTIFIC RETREAT SPONSORS

PRESENTING: Bristol Myers Squibb • Merck **PLATINUM:** Amgen
GOLD: Agenus • Alkermes • Castle Biosciences • Checkmate Pharmaceuticals • InstilBio
 • Iovance • Natera • Nektar • Novartis • Pfizer Oncology **SILVER:** Eisai • Elsevier
 • Immunocore • Regeneron **SUPPORTER:** Birds Nest Foundation • Cynthia Hazen Polsky • Elliott
 Sigal • Foundation Medicine • GigaGen • Holland & Knight • IO Biotech • L’Oréal Dermatological Beauty •
 Lumo • NeraCare • Radimmune • SecuraBio • SpotMYUV

Respondents were asked to rate aspects of the MRA Retreat on a scale of one (unsatisfactory) to five (outstanding), with the following responses received:

	Out-standing	Great	Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory	Average (out of 5)	n
Overall	80% 117	17% 25	3% 5	0% 0	0% 0	4.8	147
Registration	86% 127	9% 13	5% 7	0% 0	0% 0	4.8	147
Opening Reception	73% 86	24% 28	2% 3	1% 1	0% 0	4.7	118
Scientific Sessions	71% 101	23% 33	6% 9	0% 0	0% 0	4.6	143
Networking Roundtables	53% 71	34% 46	11% 15	1% 1	1% 1	4.4	134
Poster Sessions	66% 67	28% 28	5% 5	1% 1	0% 0	4.6	101
Meeting Facilities	82% 120	16% 24	1% 1	1% 1	0% 0	4.8	146
Virtual Platform	57% 30	34% 18	7% 4	2% 1	0% 0	4.5	53

Respondents were asked to write in what they liked most about the 2022 Retreat:



Forty-six respondents indicated the opportunity for in-person networking as what they liked most about the retreat, with individual comments including:

- ✓ I enjoyed meeting so many different stakeholders in the melanoma community – but especially hearing from the patients, caregivers, and advocates.
- ✓ It was great to go to an in-person meeting again! It felt very safe, COVID-wise, which I really appreciated.
- ✓ Networking and meeting people in-person facilitates the strongest collaborations – it really felt like we were a community!
- ✓ The COVID precautions put in place were very comforting and made me feel at ease, especially since this was the first in-person meeting for most of us in over two years. The retreat is such a valuable forum for idea exchange, and meeting virtually just doesn't compare. The networking opportunities are very unique at MRA.
- ✓ Just as the speakers, the non-presenting attendees are also major leaders in the field and a fantastic part of the retreat. Meeting these people in person is invaluable and can lead to collaborations that would not otherwise happen.
- ✓ I really do not know of any other meeting that brings together so many different voices – I am very thankful to be invited to attend!

Getting together and hearing not only the science but also the clinical experience was rejuvenating, especially since COVID has disrupted so many in-person opportunities. The decision to have the meeting in-person was the right one.

2022 Retreat Participant

Forty-three respondents indicated the science/talks as what they liked most about the retreat, with individual comments including:

- ✓ The sessions - like always - were spot on and much more impressive than similar conferences. I also loved how everyone from the melanoma community is in one place – from the researchers, to pharma, to advocates and patients, and more.
- ✓ I appreciated the diversity of speakers with respect to seniority, institution, subject matter, etc. All presentations were of the highest quality.
- ✓ As always, the scientific content of this meeting is outstanding.
- ✓ The cutting-edge content and exciting unpublished data sets the MRA Retreat apart as a leader in melanoma.
- ✓ MRA efficiently and impactfully fits a lot of important talks and topics into a two-day meeting.

Several respondents indicated they liked the poster sessions best for the opportunity to catch up with colleagues and learn about what they've been working on over the past two years, while also highlighting the new interactive digital poster platform as having a greater impact than the traditional paper posters.

Other highlights called out by two or more individuals included the Young Investigator Breakfast – specifically the opportunity to network with journal editors, the inclusion of patient voices throughout the retreat, and the Industry Roundtable discussion.

Additional cross-cutting feedback on elements favored by participants included the following:

Just being able to meet patients and see the overarching journey from discovery on the bench to treatment in practice was a wonderful experience. I have never been at a meeting that includes all stakeholders in that way.

2022 Retreat Participant

- ✓ I left with so many exciting ideas to pursue. I especially loved all of the talks, the in-between interactions, as well as the biomarker roundtable. Everything was just perfect.
- ✓ The camaraderie of the small meeting format and the opportunity to connect with like-minded people was very uplifting.
- ✓ The MRA Retreat is a rapid means to keep up-to-date with multiple perspectives in the melanoma field.
- ✓ It is so important to me, as a researcher, to understand the patient perspective, and MRA really facilitates that.
- ✓ I really enjoyed the panel discussions and the Closing Panel.
- ✓ The diversity of attendees and the broad topics covered give a great understanding of what MRA funds.

Respondents were asked what MRA should do differently or better for 2023. Responses have been grouped below by thematic domain:

Science Lectures/Panels:

- ✓ Consider having one or two plenary sessions on a general topic that is not necessarily highlighting MRA sponsored research, but a larger hot topic in the melanoma field.
- ✓ It would be nice if more young investigators or trainees had the opportunity to present. A handful of quick 10-minute lightning talks could have a great impact. They represent the future talent in melanoma research.
- ✓ I'd like to see more presentations on the rare melanomas.
- ✓ I would recommend splitting the science. Those interested in molecular drivers of melanoma and those interested in immunology are generally two distinct groups; maybe offer parallel sessions.
- ✓ Make an effort to invite different speakers than previous retreats with an emphasis on modern topics in melanoma, such as highlighting top findings from the previous year.
- ✓ MRA leadership is doing great work in order to reach out to more people that would benefit from this amazing meeting, but I would still like to see a bit more geographic diversity in the attendees/speakers.

Roundtables and Poster Sessions:

- ✓ Lunch roundtables are such a great idea, but the room was quite noisy, which made conversations across the table difficult.
- ✓ The networking roundtable discussions should be chaired and more structured, with introductions of all participants at the table and balanced discussions where everyone participates.
- ✓ A good moderator is needed at the roundtables to focus the discussion and keep us on topic.
- ✓ It would be great if the poster sessions weren't at either end of the day, especially the early morning session.
- ✓ I think the overall platform and execution was wonderful, though there was a sense of disconnection with the online-only presenters/participants.

Patient Perspective/Participation:

- ✓ It would be nice to engage individuals in discussions around how best to translate their science into meaningful advances for patients. The MRA Retreat is a unique space and to promote this type of dialog between clinicians and bench/translational investigators and is a high-value proposition.
- ✓ Perhaps take a moment to highlight who is in the audience – ie. patients/patient advocates, researchers, industry, etc.
- ✓ Offer breakout sessions for patients/advocates during some of the scientific presentations where the content may be a bit over our heads.
- ✓ Would love to have an industry-patient event, panel, lunch, reception, etc. Industry could benefit from more patient interaction in a more neutral environment.
- ✓ Create separate meetings for the RARE registry during the scientific lectures, as most of us couldn't follow what was being said and our time could be used differently.

Retreat Format / Virtual Platform / Meeting Space:

- ✓ The hotel internet is an issue. It would be nice to have Wi-Fi automatically set up in our rooms.
- ✓ I hope MRA will continue to offer both virtual and in-person formats at future retreats as it allows more equitable access.
- ✓ Many of us missed the usual group dinner this year [Thursday evening], and hope that it will be brought back, COVID-permitting.
- ✓ Many would benefit from more time for poster viewing and designated networking events.