

Melanoma Research Alliance

2015 AACR ANNUAL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN MELANOMA RESEARCH

More Than 35 MRA-Affiliated Investigators Featured

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 24, 2015—Investigators supported by the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) once again headlined sessions at this year’s annual meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), held April 18-22 in Philadelphia. Their results and the benefit to other cancers building from progress against melanoma was a strong theme throughout the entire meeting.

Researchers shared key clinical studies that add to our deepening insight on how best to use immunotherapy in melanoma. In the opening plenary session, MRA-supported researcher Antoni Ribas, MD, PhD, of the University of California, Los Angeles, presented results of a clinical trial examining two immune-checkpoint inhibitors, “Phase III study of pembrolizumab (MK-3475) versus ipilimumab in patients with IPI-naïve advanced melanoma.” The study was simultaneously published in the *New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM)*.

Additional results evaluating checkpoint inhibitors were presented by MRA-funded investigator F. Stephen Hodi, MD, in his presentation, “Improved clinical response in patients with advanced melanoma treated with nivolumab combined with ipilimumab compared to ipilimumab alone.” This study was also published concurrently in *NEJM*.

Referencing the amazing success, Suzanne Topalian, MD, an MRA board member, chair of its Scientific Advisory Panel and Director of the Melanoma Program at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University, chaired a session titled “Principles of Immunotherapy: Stepping on the Accelerator.”

Both Jennifer Wargo, MD, of MD Anderson Cancer Center, and Jedd Wolchok, MD, PhD, of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, provided results of research aimed at exploiting the potential of combining molecularly targeted therapy with immunotherapy – a different option to extend the benefit of all treatments available.

In all, 36 MRA-affiliated scientists delivered findings from their research at the AACR meeting, which underscores the remarkable progress being made in the melanoma field. MRA-funded research is leading to results in targeted and immunotherapy, which is helping other cancers progress to better outcomes.

“We’re at a point where we’re now able to compare different approved immunotherapies for patients with advanced melanoma, when the treatment options were incredibly limited just a few years ago,” said Louise M. Perkins, PhD, MRA’s Chief Science Officer. “It’s a testament to the rapid advances in the field of melanoma research, and cancer research overall.”

About The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA)

MRA is a public charity formed in 2007 under the auspices of the Milken Institute, with the generous founding support of Debra and Leon Black. MRA has dedicated more than \$60 million to research

seeking to better prevent, diagnose, and treat melanoma, the most deadly type of skin cancer. Due to the ongoing support of its founders, 100% of every dollar MRA raises goes to support its melanoma research program. The organization is poised to build on recent momentum in the field, accelerating the pace of scientific discovery and translation in order to eliminate suffering and death due to melanoma. MRA's ability to fund wide-ranging research in melanoma is amplified by unique multi-faceted collaborations and partnerships with individuals, private foundations, and corporations.

For more information on MRA, please visit www.CureMelanoma.org.

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