



**2017-2018 SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY  
FOR  
ACRAL MELANOMA RESEARCH**

November 22, 2017

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is pleased to announce a **Special Opportunity for Acral Melanoma Research**. Both **Team Science Award** and **Young Investigator Award** proposals will be considered via this Request for Proposals (RFP). Through the generous supplemental funding available for this Special Opportunity, MRA plans to award over \$11 million for all awards announced during the 2017-2018 cycle, which also includes those announced in the First and Second Release RFPs and in the American Cancer Society-MRA joint RFP.

**Interested applicants should refer to [MRA's Second Release RFP](#) for complete instructions** on eligibility, key criteria, and instructions on how to apply. **Investigators submitting full proposals for the Acral Melanoma Research Special Opportunity in Team Science may not serve as Administrative PI on any other full proposal submitted to MRA for this cycle**, including the awards announced in the First and Second Release RFPs and in the American Cancer Society-MRA joint RFP: Understanding, Preventing and Managing Immunotherapy-Related Adverse Events (irAEs) Associated with Checkpoint Inhibition for Melanoma and Other Cancers. **Young Investigators may only submit one application for a Young Investigator Award this cycle**. Please see information about specific deadlines below.

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about MRA or its awards to Kristen Mueller, Ph.D., MRA Scientific Program Director at [kmueller@curemelanoma.org](mailto:kmueller@curemelanoma.org).

**BACKGROUND ON THIS SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR ACRAL MELANOMA RESEARCH**

Acral lentiginous melanoma is a rare and difficult-to-treat form of melanoma that arises on the palm, sole or beneath the nail. Acral melanoma accounts for approximately 2-3% of all melanomas and its incidence is relatively constant across individuals of all races and skin colors (1). Compared to cutaneous melanoma, acral melanoma is more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage and has a survival rate that is 10-20% lower, overall. Recent studies have explored the genomic landscape of acral melanoma (2-5). Of note, acral melanoma typically has far fewer point mutations relative to cutaneous melanoma and chromosomal aberrations are frequently observed. Alterations to genes such as NF1 and CCND1, as well as to the promoter of TERT, are common in both acral and cutaneous melanoma, while BRAF mutations are relatively rare in acral melanoma. In addition, chromosomal amplification encompassing the adapter protein CRKL has been observed in individuals with acral melanoma.

How loss of NF1, CCND1 amplification, TERT promoter mutation, and CRKL amplification contribute to disease development and/or progression specifically in the context of acral melanoma is not well understood. Moreover, therapies targeting acral melanomas with these changes are urgently needed.

With this Special Opportunity, MRA is offering both Team Science and Young Investigator Awards for research that will lead to therapeutic targeting of acral melanomas. **Priority will be given to proposals**

**that focus on NF1 loss, TERT promoter alterations, CCND1 and/or CRKL amplification.** Research leading to therapeutic interventions and/or improved understanding of how these genetic alterations contribute to acral melanoma development and progression will be considered. **Acral melanoma need not be the sole focus of the research, however, priority will be given to proposals that incorporate acral melanoma in at least one specific aim.**

Both Team and Young Investigator **applicants must send the proposal title, 250 word technical abstract and team members (if relevant) via email to Kristen Mueller, Ph.D.,** MRA Scientific Program Director at [kmueller@curemelanoma.org](mailto:kmueller@curemelanoma.org) by **December 15, 2017**. Additionally, Young Investigator applicants must contact Tasheema Prince ([tprince@curemelanoma.org](mailto:tprince@curemelanoma.org)) by **December 15, 2017** to confirm eligibility.

## **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AWARD FOR TEAM SCIENCE**

**Proposal title, technical abstract and list of team members are due on December 15, 2017**

**Full length proposals are due on January 9, 2018**

Team Science Awards are designed to foster a multidisciplinary, collaborative research process and promote transformational research advances with the potential for rapid clinical translation in prevention, early detection, staging and/or treatment of melanoma. Awardees will be provided with up to \$300,000 per year for three years (up to \$900,000 total).

Teams must consist of two or more established PIs and a Young Investigator with complementary expertise. The designated Administrative PI is responsible for administrative leadership. All PIs on the team share authority for scientific leadership. **Each team must include at least one Young Investigator as a co-investigator** (see and comply with all Young Investigator eligibility criteria in the First Release RFP <https://www.curemelanoma.org/assets/Uploads/MRA-2017-2018-RFP-FINAL2.pdf>), whose work must be integral to one or more of the aims of the proposal. The Young Investigator cannot be the Administrative PI. The team must also designate one Mentor for the Young Investigator, who is at an academic rank above that of the Young Investigator and at the same institution. Mentors need not have any other role on the team. A designated Young Investigator on a team science application may also apply for a Young Investigator Award under any MRA RFP this cycle.

Team Science Awards have a collaborative and multidisciplinary emphasis, involving meaningful collaboration between participants. **Research proposals must include a description of the nature of and rationale for the proposed collaboration, the specific role of all PIs and the Young Investigator, and synergistic opportunities.** Evidence of prior productive collaborations between members of the team is also useful.

## **SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY AWARDS FOR YOUNG INVESTIGATORS**

**Proposal title, technical abstract and confirmation of eligibility are due on December 15, 2017**

**Proposals are due on January 9, 2018**

Young Investigator Awards aim to attract early career scientists with novel ideas into the field of melanoma, thereby recruiting and supporting the next generation of melanoma research leaders. Awardees will be provided up to \$75,000 per year for three years (up to \$225,000 total) to accomplish innovative and creative, preclinical, translational, and/or early clinical research projects.

Applicants must be within four years of their first independent, full time academic faculty appointment at the time of application at the level of Assistant Professor (or equivalent position). Applicants need not be on a tenure-track; however, fellows or others who are in training are not eligible to apply. Those who are in research support positions are not eligible to apply. Applications from those who have secured an independent full-time faculty position commencing by July 1, 2018 will be considered; in this case, a letter from an institutional official or department chairperson confirming the planned date of faculty appointment is required at the time of application. Any applicant not expected to hold an Assistant Professor position (e.g., Instructor or other title) by July 1, 2018 must contact MRA to confirm eligibility prior to submitting a proposal. To confirm eligibility, interested applicants must send an email, along with their biosketch, to Tasheema Prince, MRA Scientific Program Manager, at [tprince@curemelanoma.org](mailto:tprince@curemelanoma.org) by December 29, 2017. Investigators who have been awarded a prior MRA Young Investigator Award are not eligible to apply for an additional MRA Young Investigator Award.

Young Investigator applicants must designate one Mentor, who is an established investigator at the same institution who will ensure that adequate support and guidance are provided for successful completion of the proposed research project. A support letter from the Mentor must be included in the application package and should confirm that the applicant has an independent research program and include a brief statement about the applicant, the Mentor's role, mentoring plan, the research environment, and sources of institutional support that the applicant will utilize in conducting the project.

1. *Arch Dermatol.* 2009; 145(4):427-434.
2. *N Engl J Med.* 2005; 353(20):2135-47.
3. *Nature.* 2017; 545(7653):175-180.
4. *Genome Res.* 2017; 27(4):524-532.
5. *J. Invest. Dermatol.* 2017; pii. S0022-202X(17):32917-2.