

**2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS  
DERMATOLOGY FELLOWS AWARD  
APRIL 27, 2020**

The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is pleased to announce a call for applications to our Dermatology Fellowship Award program. The aim of this training program is to drive greater interest in the prevention, detection, diagnosis, and staging of melanoma among dermatologists by investing in post-docs and medical residents focused on dermatology.

Interested applicants should refer to this RFP for complete instructions on eligibility, key criteria, and instructions on how to apply for the MRA Dermatology Fellows Award. MRA plans to award up to seven new MRA Dermatology Fellow Awards, as well as renew up to seven current Dermatology Fellow Awards during the 2020-2021 cycle.

Email questions about this RFP, eligibility, or other issues about MRA or its awards to Rachel Fischer at [rfischer@curemelanoma.org](mailto:rfischer@curemelanoma.org).

***Full proposals due 5 p.m. Eastern Time, July 15, 2020***

**New Applicants:**

**Award Term:** 1 Year with the possibility of a 2<sup>nd</sup> year renewal

**Award Amount:** Up to \$35,000 total costs for one year. A second, renewal year may be possible based on progress and a Year Two Renewal Proposal.

**Renewing Applicants:**

**Award Term:** 1 Year

**Award Amount:** Up to \$35,000 total costs for one year.

Please see descriptions of and instructions below for specific details on eligibility and instructions on how to apply.

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## INTRODUCTION

**About Melanoma:** According to the National Cancer Institute, melanoma is the fifth most common cancer in the United States and rates continue to increase. More effective options for patients and those at risk are urgently needed. While research and treatment have advanced significantly in recent years, leading to the availability of immunotherapies and molecularly targeted therapies for patients, there is a significant need for developing new treatment approaches, optimizing the effectiveness of existing and emerging therapies, and better preventing, detecting, and diagnosing melanoma. From a basic and clinical research perspective, melanoma occupies the crossroads of molecular biology and immunology. Cutaneous melanomas can be analyzed at the earliest stages of carcinogenesis for molecular events or signatures predicting progression, invasion, and dissemination.

**About the MRA:** Founded in 2007 by Debra and Leon Black under the auspices of the Milken Institute, MRA has become the largest non-profit funder of melanoma research world-wide. The mission of MRA is to **end suffering and death due to melanoma** by collaborating with all stakeholders to accelerate powerful research, advance cures for all patients, and prevent more melanomas. To date, the MRA has awarded \$110 million to support research projects worldwide. Please visit [www.curemelanoma.org](http://www.curemelanoma.org) for further information on MRA. To search for past MRA research awards by institution, grant award mechanism, investigator, or key word – please visit [www.curemelanoma.org/grants](http://www.curemelanoma.org/grants).

**About the MRA Dermatology Fellows Program:** Recognizing the need to strengthen research into the prevention and detection of melanoma, as well as increase dermatology scientists’ and physicians’ overall engagement within the field of melanoma research, MRA launched the MRA Dermatology Fellows Award as a Pilot Program in 2019. In 2007, when MRA formed, only two FDA-approved treatments existed for metastatic melanoma. Since then, 12 new treatment options have gained approval, improved health outcomes and added years of life for patients. At the same time, less focus has been placed on—and less progress made in—prevention and detection. Improved prevention, detection, diagnosis, and staging can deliver a profound impact on melanoma. Early detection greatly improves overall survival and

comprehensive and coordinated prevention programs – comprehensive programs such as those carried out in Australia – have been proven to reduce melanoma incidence.

## OBJECTIVE

MRA aims to strengthen the engagement of dermatology residents as well as Ph.D. and/or M.D. postdoctoral fellows in departments or divisions of dermatology with research aimed at improving melanoma prevention, detection, diagnosis, and/or staging. In pursuit of this goal, **MRA welcomes proposals with immediate real-world implications for public health, prevention, and/or clinical practice in the following areas:**

- **Prevention:**
  - Elucidation of environmental, epidemiological, biological, and/or behavioral factors that lead to increased risk of melanoma, and that can inform prevention and/or detection strategies in melanoma patients or in those at risk of developing melanoma;
  - Research, design, or implementation of interventions that educate and/or evolve clinical practice related to melanoma among dermatologists, primary care physicians, health systems, residents, medical students, and/or the public to maximize risk-reduction and/or early detection.
  
- **Detection, Diagnosis, and Staging:**
  - Development, study, or evaluation of targeted screening methods in melanoma patients, individuals at risk for melanoma, and/or the general public;
  - Systems design/interventions that will improve screening rates for melanoma among dermatologists, or that build a knowledge base that will help to further the goal of earlier detection;
  - Use of clinical samples to identify and/or validate diagnostic and prognostic biomarkers;
  - Use and/or advancement of technologies to improve melanoma diagnosis and/or risk stratification.

Proposed efforts may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ demonstration projects both within applicant's own health system or in community settings,
- ✓ immersive study in areas that can advance melanoma practice,
- ✓ augmentation of larger research efforts and/or clinical trials by applicant that could show value-add in improving prevention and detection efforts, or
- ✓ research appropriate to the scale of resources.

MRA also encourages the application of artificial intelligence (AI) across any of these areas.

Note that all applications for the Dermatology Fellows Award should be focused on melanoma prevention, detection, diagnosis, and/or staging.

### REVIEW AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will be used to assess the merit of proposals for award:

- **Significance:** Original, innovative, and transformative efforts with strong scientific rationale and clear capacity to enhance prevention, detection, diagnosis, and/or staging for patients with melanoma or for individuals at risk will be prioritized.
- **Approach:** MRA seeks outstanding and technically rigorous proposals as determined by peer review. Overall study design, methodology, and analyses must be appropriate to accomplish specific aims.
- **Clinical and/or Real-World Relevance:** Proposals that articulate a clear path to near-term clinical application, or that can impact practice in prevention and detection strategies will be favored.
- **Investigator:** Applicant has appropriate training, expertise and evidence of productivity to carry out proposed research/project.
- **Mentor:** Selected Mentor is appropriate to advance applicant's career and project with evidence of strong mentorship relationship.

### APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility requirements for new applicants:

- MRA encourages applications from a diverse pool of dermatology trainees.
- Applicants must have a doctoral degree (M.D. or Ph.D.) by the date of award activation and must conduct their proposed research/project under a Mentor who holds a formal appointment at the host institution's Department/Division of Dermatology.
- New applicants must hold a trainee position, such as postdoc or medical resident, at a not-for-profit, non-governmental U.S. research institution at the time of application.
- Applications are limited to applicants from a Department/Division of Dermatology with an established pigmented lesion clinic/program.
- Mentors must be a faculty member with an appointment in a U.S. department/division of dermatology with an ACGME (Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education) approved training program (secondary appointments are allowed).
- Applicants may be residents, as well as M.D.'s conducting a postdoctoral fellowship. Proposals from applicants who will hold an independent faculty position at the time of award activation will not be considered.
- At institutions with policies that prohibit residents from being able to receive research grant funding, the Mentor may serve as the primary investigator on the proposal.
  - In this case, please provide a letter from the Department Chair stating such a policy exists and email Rachel Fischer at [rfischer@curemelanoma.org](mailto:rfischer@curemelanoma.org) to ensure MRA is aware.
- Applicants need not be specifically trained in melanoma research, but must have a demonstrated interest in melanoma.
- Up to two new applications from a single institution may be submitted, in addition to any renewal applications.

Eligibility requirements for renewing applicants:

- All current MRA Dermatology Fellow Awardees are eligible for award renewal.

## APPLICATION FORMAT AND INSTRUCTIONS

All applications are due by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Proposals will not be considered after the deadline. Applicants must utilize the proposalCENTRAL online application tool at <https://proposalcentral.com> and the document templates and requirements therein. Please carefully follow the instructions in proposalCENTRAL and below. Applications include the following steps and components:

### NEW APPLICANTS

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title.
2. **Templates and Instructions:** Download RFP and templates.
3. **Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal:** Allow others (e.g., institutional administrators or collaborators) to view, edit, or submit your proposal.
4. **Applicant/PI:** Key information about the applicant. If the applicant is the Mentor due to institutional policies, please provide a letter from the Department Chair in the Upload Attachments section stating such a policy exists and email Rachel Fischer at [rfischer@curemelanoma.org](mailto:rfischer@curemelanoma.org) to ensure MRA is aware.
5. **Organization/Institution:** Key information about the applicant's institution, including name and email address of the signing official who, in addition to the applicant, will be contacted if the award is selected for funding.
6. **Key Personnel:** List and provide contact information for key persons. A Mentor from the same institution is required.
7. **Data and Renewable Reagent Sharing Plan:** In order to promote rapid research advancement, transparency, reproducibility, and collaboration, MRA encourages the open sharing of data and resources generated from its funded awards. Provide information for the types of data and renewable reagents that will be generated as part of the award and how they will be shared.
8. **Abstracts and Keywords:** Provide a general audience abstract (non-technical) and a technical abstract (2,000 characters' maximum each) and keywords. Please note: the general audience abstract will become public if the award is selected for funding, therefore, it should not contain any proprietary information.

9. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for the award period requested. Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges. Fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.
10. **Budget Summary and Justification:** A summary of the budget detail will be shown in this step. In addition, provide sufficient detail for the evaluation of the major portions of the budget that are being requested. If more space is required than is provided in the proposalCENTRAL forms (2,000 characters), applicants may upload the budget justification in document form in step # 12.
11. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.
12. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
  - a. **Biosketch for applicant and key personnel:** Please upload an NIH format Biosketch for applicant, Mentor and any additional Key Personnel. Biosketches for research support staff, students, postdocs and other training positions are not required (with the exception of the applicant Fellow). Key Personnel who do not have an NIH biosketch may use the template provided in proposalCENTRAL.
  - b. **Project description:** Must be formatted in Arial 11-point or Times New Roman 12-point font with no less than ½ inch margins. The project description should be 3 pages maximum, inclusive of the following: Background and specific aims, preliminary data, experimental design and methods, figures (which may be embedded within the above sections), and rationale/fit with key criteria, including the potential for clinical impact.
  - c. **Literature references:** A list of up to 20 references supporting the project description is allowed, in addition to the 3-page project description.
  - d. **Mentor Letter of Support:** Include a letter of support from an established scientific Mentor at the same institution who holds a formal appointment in the Department of Dermatology, who is familiar with the applicant and his/her work and will provide guidance and support for the project. The Mentor's letter should confirm that the applicant has an interest in dermatology research 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. MRA recognizes that unconscious bias can manifest in such support letters and therefore strongly recommends considering these or similar guidelines when preparing such letters: <https://tinyurl.com/yapwnw3a>.
  - e. **Application checklist:** Please fill out to ensure all application materials are complete and applicant is eligible to apply.
13. **Applicant Data Sheet:** Please provide your ORCID ID. If you do not have an ORCID ID, you can register for one here: <https://orcid.org/register>. MRA requests that applicants provide additional

demographic information, but it is not required and is not used in any way during the selection process.

14. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.
15. **Signature Page(s):** Print the signature page, which must be signed by the applicant and the institution's signing official, and uploaded as part of the application package, or sign electronically.
16. **Submit:** Please note that no proposals will be able to be submitted past their deadline. Technical support for the on-line application system is not available after 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

### RENEWING APPLICANTS

1. **Title Page:** Enter the project title.
2. **Templates and Instructions:** Download RFP and templates.
3. **Enable Other Users to Access This Proposal:** Allow others (e.g., institutional administrators or collaborators) to view, edit, or submit your proposal.
4. **Applicant/PI:** Key information about the applicant.
5. **Organization/Institution:** Key information about the applicant's institution, including name and email address of the signing official who, in addition to the applicant, will be contacted if the award is selected for funding.
6. **Key Personnel:** List and provide contact information for key persons. The same Mentor from Year 1 of the project is required.
7. **Data and Renewable Reagent Sharing Plan:** In order to promote rapid research advancement, transparency, reproducibility, and collaboration, MRA encourages the open sharing of data and resources generated from its funded awards. Provide information for the types of data and renewable reagents that will be generated as part of the award and how they will be shared.
8. **Abstracts and Keywords:** Provide a general audience abstract (non-technical) and a technical abstract (2,000 characters' maximum each) and keywords. Please note: the general audience abstract will become public if the award is selected for funding, therefore, it should not contain any proprietary information.
9. **Budget Period Detail:** Enter budget detail for the award period requested. Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges. Fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.

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11. **Organizational Assurances:** IRB and IACUC approvals, if applicable.
12. **Upload Attachments:** Upload the following:
  - a. **Biosketch for applicant and key personnel:** Please upload an NIH format Biosketch for applicant Fellow, Mentor and any additional Key Personnel. Biosketches for research support staff, students, postdocs and other training positions are not required (with the exception of the applicant). Key Personnel who do not have an NIH biosketch may use the template provided in proposalCENTRAL.
  - a. **Project description:** Must be formatted in Arial 11-point or Times New Roman 12-point font with no less than ½ inch margins. The project description should be 3 pages maximum, inclusive of the following: Background and specific aims, preliminary data that includes a progress update on the work conducted thus far on the current award, experimental design and methods, figures (which may be embedded within the above sections), and rationale/fit with key criteria, including the potential for clinical impact. The research proposed should build on the applicant’s currently funded MRA Dermatology Fellows Award.
  - b. **Literature references:** A list of up to 20 references supporting the project description is allowed, in addition to the 3-page project description.
  - c. **Application checklist:** Please fill out to ensure all application materials are complete.
13. **Applicant Data Sheet:** Please provide your ORCID ID. If you do not have an ORCID ID, you can register for one here: <https://orcid.org/register>. MRA requests that applicants provide additional demographic information, but it is not required and is not used in any way during the selection process.
14. **Validate:** Check for any missing required information.
15. **Signature Page(s):** Print the signature page, which must be signed by the applicant and the institution’s signing official, and uploaded as part of the application package, or sign electronically.
16. **Submit:** Please note that no proposals will be able to be submitted past their deadline. Technical support for the on-line application system is not available after 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time.



### TIMELINE

**Application deadline concludes at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 15<sup>th</sup>. Proposals submitted after the deadline will not be considered.**

**April 27, 2020:** Dermatology Fellows Award - Program Request-for-Proposals (RFP) issued

**July 15, 2020:** Applications due

**Early September 2020:** Awardees notified

**October 1, 2020:** Projects start

### REVIEW MECHANISM

All proposals will undergo rigorous peer review by the MRA Dermatology Council (DC), comprised of experts in diverse areas of dermatology, translational, and clinical research. Applications will be scored according to MRA Review and Selection Criteria. To minimize any real or perceived conflicts of interest (COI), MRA asks Dermatology Council members to adhere to a rigorous set of COI guidelines. Further information about these guidelines are available upon request. Please contact Rachel Fischer at [rfischer@curemelanoma.org](mailto:rfischer@curemelanoma.org). All awards are contingent upon ratification by the MRA Board of Directors.

### AWARD ADMINISTRATION

#### AWARD LETTER

Upon acceptance of the award, the Fellow and his/her employing Institution will be required to sign an Award Letter indicating acceptance of the MRA's Award Terms and Conditions within 30 days, which can be found here <https://www.curemelanoma.org/assets/Uploads/PDFs/TermsAndConditions2019.pdf>. MRA must be notified in advance and approve any significant changes in research objectives, key personnel (including transfer to another employee), or budget.

#### APPROVALS

MRA requires certification through proposalCENTRAL of compliance with Human Subjects and Animal Care Assurance as applicable. In cases where ethical/regulatory approval is required to perform the work, such approvals will be required before initial payments are made. This includes local IRB approvals of clinical trials supported by MRA funding.

#### FUNDING

For all proposals, the level of funding may be adjusted by MRA as appropriate for the scope of the proposal and the funds available. **Awards will not support indirect costs, overhead costs, or other similar institutional charges;** however, fringe benefits for personnel salaries are allowable.

### **MRA SCIENTIFIC RETREAT**

Fellows will be invited to attend the annual MRA Scientific Retreat. Fellows are expected to attend and may be asked to present research findings or project outcomes made under their awards at these meetings. MRA will cover reasonable travel costs related to participation in the Scientific Retreat.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **New Applicants**

**Q: I do not hold the title of Fellow but I do hold the title of my institution's entry level, postdoctoral appointment. Am I eligible to apply?**

A: Post-terminal degree, training appointments that are not tenure-track/permanent positions may be eligible to apply. Applicants cannot hold independent, faculty-level appointments.

**Q: I am an Assistant Professor at an academic institution. Am I eligible to apply?**

A: Generally, no, unless the Assistant Professor title is equivalent to a Fellow position. Those currently in training positions are eligible. Only those who are postdocs or medical residents will be considered. Dermatology Fellow Award applicants who do not hold a 'Fellow' title must contact MRA to verify their eligibility prior to submitting a proposal (see contact information in this RFP).

**Q: What is the role of the Mentor?**

A: It is expected that Fellows have appropriate expertise and evidence of productivity to carry out the proposed research training project. However, a Mentor is required and it is expected the applicant will work closely with the Mentor in execution of this training project. The Mentor must hold a formal appointment at the applicant's institution's Department/Division of Dermatology.

**Q: I would like to have a Mentor that is not at my institution. Is this allowed?**

A: No. All Fellow applicants must have a designated Mentor at their institution to help to ensure that the Fellow has the resources they need to successfully carry out the work at their institution. An applicant may have additional mentors outside of their institution for other purposes, including providing scientific guidance for the project, but they will not be considered a Mentor for the award.

**Q: Are Mentors of Fellow applicants allowed to be a PI of an existing MRA award or award application during the 2020-2021 cycle?**

A: Yes, however, each research proposal must have a distinct hypothesis.

**Q: Is there a minimum level of effort for the Mentor?**

A: No. Mentors should not be listed as having any percent effort on the award.

**Q: What should be covered in the Mentor Letter of Support?**

A: Applicants should include a letter of support from an established scientific Mentor at the same institution, from within the Department of Dermatology, who is familiar with the applicant and his/her work and will provide guidance and support for the project. The Mentor's letter should confirm that the applicant has an interest in dermatology research 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. MRA recognizes that unconscious bias can manifest in such support letters and therefore strongly recommends considering these or similar guidelines when preparing such letters: <https://tinyurl.com/yapwnw3a>.

**Q: Are Assistant Professors allowed to be Mentors?**

A: Applicants are encouraged to select a Mentor who is a tenured faculty member.

**Q: Can a faculty member serve as a Mentor for more than one applicant?**

A: Yes, faculty may serve as a Mentor for more than one applicant.

**Q: Can faculty with a secondary ACGME appointment serve as a Mentor?**

A: Yes, faculty with primary or secondary ACGME appointments may serve as a Mentor.

**Q: What is the expected level of percent effort for a Fellow?**

A: There is no specific requirement around percent effort, but MRA encourages a minimum of 25% effort on the project. If 25% effort is prohibitive, please provide an accompanying letter to describe why a reduced effort is necessary.

**Q: I will not receive my Ph.D. or M.D. until after the application deadline. May I apply?**

A: Applicant Fellows must have received their advanced degree at the time of proposal submission deadline.

**Q: Will you consider postdocs or medical residents who are not trained in melanoma research?**

A: Yes. Investigators need not be specifically trained in melanoma research, but must have a demonstrated interest in melanoma.

### Renewing Applicants

**Q: Can I select a different Mentor for Year 2 of my project?**

A: No, we ask that you keep the same Mentor.

**Q: I am no longer in a training position or will no longer be in a training position at time of award activation. May I still apply to renew my MRA Dermatology Fellow Award?**

A: Yes, all current awardees can apply to renew their award independent of their current position.

**Q: Can I propose a research project that is distinct from my currently funded MRA Dermatology Fellows Award?**

**A:** No, research proposed by renewing applicants must build on their currently funded MRA Dermatology Fellows Award.