For Immediate Release

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Melanoma Research Alliance Announces $13 Million in Grants to Advance Melanoma Prevention, Detection & Treatment

WASHINGTON, D.C., May 19, 2022 – Coinciding with Melanoma Awareness Month, the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), the largest non-profit funder of melanoma research, today announced funding for 27 research grants totaling $13,046,774 to support new research aimed at advancing melanoma prevention, diagnosis and treatment. Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer and the fifth most common cancer in the United States.

The grants will support 11 Team Science Awards, 10 Young Investigator Awards, and 6 Pilot Awards. MRA grant awards back development of innovative ideas that offer the promise of rapidly improving outcomes for melanoma patients.

This year’s grant awards focus on a variety of approaches, including the use of novel cellular barcodes to identify causes – and possible treatments – of resistant disease; research focused on rare melanoma subtypes ways to improve response to existing checkpoint immunotherapies; and two pilot awards co-funded with the Michael J. Fox Foundation to study the connection between melanoma and Parkinson’s Disease.

“These scientific proposals selected this year for funding by MRA’s expert Grant Review Committee are exceptional,” said MRA Chief Executive Officer Marc Hurlbert, PhD. “We are at a pivotal moment in the fight against melanoma. We are thrilled to support this critical work with the hope of benefiting all patients and families dealing with melanoma, and preventing countless more from having to do so.”

2022 Melanoma Research Alliance Grant Awards

Team Science Awards

Targeting Oncogenic Gaq in Uveal Melanoma
MRA Team Science Award
Boris Bastian, MD, The University of California, San Francisco
Identification & Validation of Novel Druggable Targets in Mucosal Melanoma
*MRA Team Science Award*
Genevieve Boland MD, PhD, Massachusetts General Hospital

**Targeting Epigenetics to Enhance Anti-Melanoma Immunity**
*Leveraged Finance Fights Melanoma – MRA Team Science Award*
Marcus Bosenberg MD, PhD, Yale University

**Targeting RNA Processing to Enhance Mucosal Melanoma Immunotherapy**
*MRA Team Science Award*
Rotem Karni PhD, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**Harnessing B Cell Checkpoints in Melanoma**
*MRA Team Science Award, collaboratively funded by Brigham and Women’s Hospital and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center*
Vijay Kuchroo DVM, PhD, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Inc.

**Targeting Chromothripsis to Suppress Metastasis and Therapy Resistance**
*MRA Team Science Award*
Roger Lo MD, PhD, The University of California, Los Angeles

**Cellular Barcoding to Define Melanoma Drug Resistance and Cell of Origin**
*MRA Team Science Award for Women in Melanoma Research*
Elizabeth E. Patton PhD, University of Edinburgh

**Identifying Public Neoantigens, their TCRs and their Rules of Engagement**
*MRA Team Science Award*
Yardena Samuels PhD, Weizmann Institute of Science

**Improving Immunological Memory During Anti-PD-1 Immunotherapy**
*MRA Team Science Award, collaboratively funded by Harvard Medical School and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute*
Arlene Sharpe MD, PhD, Harvard Medical School

**Noninvasive Prediction of Severe Toxicity from Immune Checkpoint Blockade**
*MRA Team Science Award, collaboratively funded by Yale University, Washington University, and Stanford University*
Mario Sznol MD, Yale University

**Team Science Academic-Industry Partnership Award**

**Analytical and Clinical Validation of a Multiplex IF Biomarker for Anti-PD1**
*MRA Team Science Academic-Industry Partnership Award*
Janis Taube MD, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

**Young Investigator Awards**
New Genetic Tools to Understand the Role of M6A in Melanomagenesis  
*MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Claudio Alarcon PhD, Yale University, School of Medicine

Decipher the Epigenetic Code Regulating Cellular Dynamics in Acral Melanoma  
*MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Junyue Cao PhD, The Rockefeller University

Targeting Anti-Tumor Immunity in Anatomically Distinct Mucosal Melanomas  
*MRA Young Investigator Award for Women in Melanoma Research*  
Kasey Couts PhD, University of Colorado Denver

Investigating Lipid Kinase Pip4k2c in Regulating Anti-Tumor Immunity  
*Bristol Myers Squibb – MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Karen Dixon PhD, Brigham and Women's Hospital

Mechanisms and Relevance of Treg Expansion after PD-1 Blockade in Melanoma  
*Bristol Myers Squibb – MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Francesco Marangoni PhD, The University of California, Irvine

Interfering with Early Cell State Transitions to Prevent Drug Tolerance  
*The Wayne Stinchcomb Big Orange Melanoma Foundation – MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Florian Rambow PhD, Essen University Hospital

Interrogating Epigenetic Regulation of PD1 in Melanoma-Infiltrating T Cells  
*Leveraged Finance Fights Melanoma – MRA Young Investigator Award in memory of Michael Konigsberg*  
Debattama Sen PhD, Massachusetts General Hospital

Tumor-Stroma Metabolic Crosstalk in Melanoma Brain Metastases  
*Tara Miller Melanoma Foundation – MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Inna Smalley PhD, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute

Investigating the role of FGL1/LAG-3 Axis in Melanoma Immunity  
*Bristol Myers Squibb – MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Jun Wang PhD, New York University School of Medicine

mRNA-Based Re-Programming of Terminally Differentiated TILs  
*MRA Young Investigator Award*  
Yochai Wolf PhD, The Sheba Fund for Health Service and Research

**Pilot Awards**

A Strategy to Identify the Basis of Melanoma and Parkinson's Comorbidity  
*The Michael J. Fox Foundation – MRA Pilot Award*  
Deanna L. Benson PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Investigating ARID2 as a Suppressor of Melanoma Metastasis  
*MRA Pilot Award for Women in Melanoma Research*  
Emily Bernstein PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Combined Intrathecal Immunotherapeutic Strategies for Melanoma LMD  
*MRA Pilot Award*  
Sherise Ferguson MD, University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

Novel Mouse Models of Uveal Melanoma  
*MRA Pilot Award*  
Florian Karreth PhD, H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, Inc

The Role of APC Mutations in Melanoma Brain Metastasis  
*Leveraged Finance Fights Melanoma – MRA Pilot Award*  
James Robinson PhD, The University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

Alpha-Synuclein’s Role in Melanoma Formation and Metastasis  
*The Michael J. Fox Foundation – MRA Pilot Award*  
Vivek Unni MD, PhD, Oregon Health & Science University

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**About Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA)**

The Melanoma Research Alliance exists to accelerate treatment options and find a cure for melanoma. As the largest nonprofit funder of melanoma research, it has dedicated over $143 million and leveraged an additional $417 million in collaborative and follow-on funding towards its mission. Through its support, MRA has championed revolutions in immunotherapy, targeted therapies, novel combinations and diagnostics. Due to the ongoing support of its founders, 100 percent of donations to MRA go directly to its melanoma research program. MRA’s ability to fund wide-ranging research in melanoma is amplified by unique collaborations and partnerships with individuals, private foundations, and corporations. Visit [http://www.CureMelanoma.org](http://www.CureMelanoma.org) for more information.

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