

# Melanoma Research Alliance

## **MELANOMA DEVELOPMENTS HIGHLIGHTED AT 2013 AACR ANNUAL MEETING** *More Than 20 MRA-Affiliated Investigators Spoke or Led Sessions*

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 10, 2013—MRA-sponsored investigators and research once again headlined major sessions at this year's annual meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), held April 6-10 in Washington, DC. Suzanne Topalian, Chair of the Scientific Advisory Panel of the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), and MRA-sponsored investigator Patricia LoRusso, were among the leading scientists and clinicians who presented, highlighting the continued progress that is underway in the field of melanoma research.

Dr. Topalian, who also serves as Director of the Melanoma Program at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University, during a plenary session spoke on "Immune checkpoint blockade: Unleashing the immune system against cancer." Her work, which is funded through a MRA Team Science Award, focuses on a new immune checkpoint inhibitor called anti-PD-1. MRA is supporting key work to identify treatment related biomarkers and combinatorial therapy approaches.

In all, more than 20 MRA-affiliated scientists delivered findings from their research at the AACR meeting, including Patricia LoRusso, co-lead of the Melanoma Dream Team, which is jointly sponsored by MRA and Stand Up to Cancer (SU2C).

Dr. LoRusso discussed, "Personalized Medicine for Patients with BRAF Wild-Type (BRAFWT) Cancer," a project that is investigating personalized target identification and molecularly guided therapy for those metastatic melanoma patients having no oncogenic mutation in the BRAF gene and for whom there are few options.

Several MRA-funded investigators received awards at the meeting, including James Allison of M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Alexander Levitzki of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Roger Lo of the University of California Los Angeles.

"The amazing progress in the fight against melanoma is underscored by the results presented at AACR by MRA's partners and researchers who are leading the way in genomics, immunotherapy, and targeted treatments to improve patient outcomes," noted Dr. Louise M. Perkins, Chief Science Officer at MRA.

### **About the Melanoma Research Alliance**

MRA is the largest private funder of melanoma research, having in its six-year history awarded more than \$38 million with plans to announce another \$9-10 million in 2013. 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. A particular area of emphasis for MRA's research program is the development of new therapeutic approaches for metastatic melanoma, including those highlighted at the AACR meeting. MRA 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.

**For a full listing of MRA-affiliated investigators presenting at the meeting go to [www.aacr.org](http://www.aacr.org).**

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