

Melanoma Research Alliance

MULTIPLE IMMUNE-BASED MELANOMA DEVELOPMENTS TAKE CENTER STAGE AT ASCO 2013 ANNUAL MEETING

Research From More Than 40 MRA-Affiliated Investigators Highlighted

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 4, 2013— Advances in melanoma research were a highlight of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting, held May 31 - June 4 in Chicago. The meeting is the premier conference focused on clinical cancer research, drawing nearly 30,000 cancer physicians, scientists, advocates and representatives of industry and philanthropy.

Scientific progress from more than 40 Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA)-sponsored researchers was featured at this year's meeting, with many MRA investigators presenting and leading sessions discussing new findings.

"It was remarkable to attend this year's ASCO meeting, where melanoma progress was among the biggest headlines," said Wendy Selig, President and CEO of the MRA. "We are so encouraged by the newly reported data in experimental and approved immunotherapy treatments as well as the FDA approval of two new targeted therapies. Melanoma patients and their clinicians now have access to additional tools to fight this devastating disease—tools that are proving to be far more effective than what has historically been available. MRA and the broader melanoma research community are spurred on by this progress, and we know that many questions must still be answered before we have achieved our goal of eliminating suffering and death from melanoma."

Key findings presented at this year's meeting included reports on the clinical testing of immune checkpoint inhibitors targeting a pathway known as PD-1. This therapeutic approach, whose clinical utility was established by the FDA approval of ipilimumab in 2011, has produced promising data in patients with advanced melanoma and other cancers as well. To date, MRA has awarded more than \$10 million related to immune checkpoint blockade, including defining treatment-related biomarkers and developing combinatorial therapy approaches.

In the area of molecularly targeted therapy, resistance mechanisms to BRAF inhibition were highlighted along with the potential for new drugs targeting BRAF and its downstream target, MEK. Altogether, these studies demonstrate the research community's strong continued focus on melanoma and as well as significant progress toward new treatments and, ultimately, a cure for melanoma.

These reports and two new genetically-targeted melanoma treatments approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) last week are putting 2013 on track to be another banner year for progress in melanoma research. MRA is working to accelerate the pace of discovery in the field, and the organization recently announced a record-setting \$9.6 million in 2013 grant awards to researchers investigating the deadly skin cancer.

"This year's conference theme was 'Building Bridges to Conquer Cancer,'" noted Dr. Louise M. Perkins, MRA's Chief Science Officer. "The theme is quite appropriate for MRA and our ongoing efforts to engage diverse stakeholders in the battle to defeat melanoma. MRA's Team Science and Industry Partnership awards exemplify the types of bridges that can drive progress in melanoma research and create tangible advances in the wider field of oncology."

Melanoma Research Alliance

About the Melanoma Research Alliance

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 is the largest private funder of melanoma research, having awarded \$48 million to the prevention, diagnosis and staging, and treatment of melanoma. 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. 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, please visit www.curemelanoma.org.

For more information about the meeting, visit: <http://chicago2013.asco.org/>

###

CONTACT: Anreder & Company
212.532.3232
Steven S. Anreder – steven.anreder@anreder.com
Cristina Bacon – cristina.bacon@anreder.com

Marissa Maybee (MRA) – mmaybee@curemelanoma.org
202.336.8922