

Melanoma Research Alliance

MRA Welcomes Latest Advances in Melanoma Research *Findings Revealed at ASCO Meeting Energize Field*

CHICAGO, June 6, 2011 – Until recently, patients with inoperable metastatic melanoma had very few treatment options, but we are now witnessing the launch of an era of unprecedented therapeutic opportunities.

Earlier this year, the immunotherapeutic ipilimumab received FDA approval based on the first demonstration of improved survival in a randomized melanoma trial, as reported one year ago at the 2010 annual ASCO meeting. The field is now further energized by a report at this year's ASCO meeting that vemurafenib, a BRAF inhibitor that works by a completely different mechanism than ipilimumab, also confers improved overall and progression-free survival in patients with advanced metastatic melanoma compared to standard chemotherapy.

Vemurafenib and ipilimumab exemplify the two major kinds of drugs with activity against melanoma (signaling pathway inhibitors that target the tumor directly and immune-modulating drugs that work indirectly, respectively), for which there is now a rich pipeline of clinical development. Combination treatment strategies supported by strong preclinical data are next in line and will be facilitated by recently updated FDA regulatory guidance in this area. It is anticipated that combinatorial approaches will be needed to confer complete and long-lasting tumor remissions. These advances in melanoma, which have emanated from decades of scientific groundwork, have revealed treatment paradigms applicable not only to melanoma but to many other forms of cancer as well.

###

About the Melanoma Research Alliance

The Melanoma Research Alliance is a public charity formed under the auspices of the Milken Institute, with the generous founding support of Debra and Leon Black. It supports an international, cross-disciplinary group of biomedical researchers possessing clinical and scientific expertise to explore, identify and pursue innovative solutions to critical research questions, leading to better treatments and a cure for melanoma patients. Since its founding in 2007, MRA has become the largest private funder of melanoma research. For more information about MRA's research programs, visit www.curemelanoma.org.

Karen Rogers
202-336-8919, krogers@curemelanoma.org