



Melanoma Research Alliance and the Hidary Foundation Fund Research Study of Melanoma Genomics

SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATORS AT 5 INSTITUTIONS RECEIVE \$1 MILLION TO SPUR BETTER OUTCOMES FOR PATIENTS WITH ACRAL MELANOMA AND PROVIDE BREAKTHROUGHS THROUGH THE USE OF GENOME SEQUENCING

Washington, DC, December 3rd, 2013 – The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), the leading private funder of melanoma research, and the Hidary Foundation, the philanthropic arm of technology entrepreneur Jack Hidary and his family, today announced a new research program with researchers at five institutions comprising a groundbreaking study of the genetics of acral melanoma. Two Team Science Awards will fund new work at Kaiser Permanente Research Institute, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen), University of California San Francisco (UCSF) and Vanderbilt University. The awards total \$1 million and are jointly awarded by the MRA and the Hidary Foundation.

Melanoma is an aggressive form of skin cancer and one of the fastest growing cancers in the U.S. This study will focus on acral melanoma which is a subtype of the cancer that typically forms on the palms of the hands, soles of the feet, or under the fingernails and has a 10-20% lower survival rate than non-acral cutaneous melanoma. These studies will delve into the genetic drivers of acral melanoma, insight that is crucially needed to better understand how new advances in cutaneous melanoma treatment can be applied to acral patients.

The cost of genomic sequencing has come down significantly. Five years ago, it would have cost millions of dollars to perform whole genome sequencing on a few dozen patients. Today the cost is down to a few thousand dollars per individual, and sequencing can be performed in days. This enables researchers to now use sequencing to measure tumor-specific alterations in chromosome structure, point-mutations and gene expression via a combination of whole genome, whole exome and RNA sequencing.

“We have made significant progress in the fight against melanoma since the MRA was founded in 2007,” said Debra Black, Co-Founder and Chair of the Melanoma Research Alliance. “This partnership with the Hidary Foundation underscores the need for further research into melanoma, and especially melanoma subtypes such as acral melanoma, in order to develop more effective treatment options for all melanoma patients.”

“Despite recent progress in defining the genetic basis of cutaneous melanoma, comprehensive studies are lacking in patients with acral melanoma. These two Team Science Awards bring together the diverse expertise needed to define in all patients the underlying cause of this disease. The insights gained will likely lead to future personalized treatment approaches,” said

David B. Solit, MD, of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, Chairman of MRA's Grant Review Committee.

"Genetic sequencing has decreased significantly in cost and time and can now be used as a critical tool to investigate cancer, and based on our experiences in technology, we believe that whole exome and whole genome sequencing of larger sets of patients may be key to new breakthroughs in the fight against cancer," said Jack Hidary, Chairman of the Hidary Foundation. "Our partnership with the Melanoma Research Alliance will advance this important work on melanoma. The key to genomic studies is not just sequencing, but the analysis of the data. These teams will focus on unraveling the genetic signature of this cancer, and this will extend their work to other cancers as we collectively build greater genomic capabilities."

The Hidary family's interest in acral melanoma was spurred by the discovery and successful treatment of the family's patriarch, David J. Hidary.

Recipients of these competitive Team Science Awards include one team led by Maryam Asgari, MD, MPH, of the Kaiser Permanente Research Institute that also includes multiple researchers from UCSF. Members of the second team, led by Jeffrey Sosman, MD, of Vanderbilt University, include investigators from Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and TGen.

With these latest awards, MRA has now awarded more than \$49 million to leading researchers seeking to better treat, prevent, detect, and stage melanoma. Due to the ongoing support of its founders, MRA devotes 100% of every dollar raised to melanoma research. MRA's rigorous peer-review process ensures that the organization's research dollars are allocated to projects with the potential to affect near-term improvements in the paradigm of care.

About the Hidary Foundation

The Hidary Foundation catalyzes positive change in several sectors. The Foundation has a focus on promoting innovative K-12 educational programs, particularly those that focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and those that use project-based learning approaches. The Foundation has also supported the promotion of entrepreneurship both through programs that support microfinance focusing on low-income individuals who wish to start companies as well as youth entrepreneurship. The members of the Hidary family are all entrepreneurs in fields ranging from technology and clean energy to real estate, fashion and education.

The Foundation's work on cancer will focus on the use of emerging tools such as genomic sequencing in the fight against cancer. This study with the MRA will be supported by members of the Hidary family including David and Aimee Hidary, Jack Hidary, Murray Hidary, Richard and Esther Hidary, and Michael and Sarah Hidary.

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 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. To date, MRA has supported the research of 171 investigators at 80 institutions in 14 countries. 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. Visit www.curemelanoma.org for more information.

###

CONTACT: Anreder & Company

212.532.3232

Steven S. Anreder – steven.anreder@anreder.com

Michael Wichman – Michael.Wichman@anreder.com

Marissa Maybee (MRA) – mmaybee@curemelanoma.org

202.336.8922