

# **Melanoma**

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## **Research Alliance**

### **Maintaining the Momentum in the Fight Against Melanoma**

**Dateline: Zurich—November 17, 2014**

**Society for Melanoma Research International Congress 2014**

Nearly 900 researchers from around the globe convened at the Society for Medical Research's (SMR) meeting on November 13 to 16 in Zurich, Switzerland to discuss the latest findings in melanoma research ranging from the causes of diseases to better treatments for patients. Included among the speakers were two dozen Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) medical, scientific, or grant review committees members and funded investigators.

Among the key findings presented at this SMR meeting were the first results from two different Phase 3 clinical trials of anti-PD-1 antibodies. Dr. Antoni Ribas of UCLA presented data from the trial that compared Merck's pembrolizumab to chemotherapy in ipilimumab-refractory melanoma patients. In addition, Dr. Georgina Long of Melanoma Institute of Australia shared the first results comparing BMS' nivolumab to chemotherapy in BRAF wild-type patients who had not received prior therapy. The take-home message from both of these definitive studies is that anti-PD-1 drugs considerably out-perform chemotherapy in terms of both efficacy and side-effects. And the anti-PD-1 treatments provide significant and potentially long-term benefit to patients whether used as the first-line of treatment (shown for nivolumab) or after progression on ipilimumab (shown for pembrolizumab and nivolumab).

While the clinical findings were remarkable for these drugs, it is clear from other data discussed at the meeting that the melanoma field is maintaining its momentum to use all of the treatments that have been approved as wisely as possible and to develop new approaches for patients who either fail to respond or progress on therapy. Early research data continue to reveal clues as to why melanomas develop and spread, offering new targets that can be harnessed to treat the disease with either molecularly targeted drugs, immunotherapy approaches, or rational combinations of them.

The results presented at the meeting underscore that this an incredible time of both benefit and hope for melanoma patients and that the melanoma field is leading all of cancer research as to how to use immunotherapy and molecularly targeted drugs optimally.

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## **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 has dedicated more than \$60 million to research seeking to better prevent, diagnose, and treat melanoma, the most deadly type of skin cancer. Due to the ongoing support of its founders, 100% of every dollar MRA raises goes to support its melanoma research program. In 2014, MRA was ranked first out of the top 30 grant-giving disease foundations by Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology News (GEN). The organization 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](http://www.CureMelanoma.org).

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