

Melanoma

Research Alliance

For Immediate Release

Cody R. Barnett, Director of Communications
M: (717) 880-7100
E-mail: cbarnett@curemelanoma.org

Melanoma Research Alliance Announces 13 Dermatology Fellowship Award Recipients

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 8, 2021 – The Melanoma Research Alliance, the largest non-profit funder of melanoma research, is proud to announce its 2021 Dermatology Fellowship Award recipients.

The Fellows, all MD or PhD trainees, either as dermatologists or researchers focused on dermatology, will each receive a \$35,000 grant to support an independent research or demonstration project focused on advancing melanoma prevention or detection. The Fellows also receive mentorship, networking opportunities, and other career-development support throughout the fellowship.

“Incidence of melanoma has increased, year-over-year, for the last three decades,” said MRA Board member and melanoma survivor Denise Kellen. “MRA’s Dermatology Fellowship program is attracting some of the brightest minds in the field to do the work needed to disrupt this decades-long trend.”

The MRA Dermatology Fellowship program is part of a broader effort by MRA to further engage dermatologists in research to advance melanoma prevention and early detection. Over the program’s three-year history it has supported a broad range of research projects focused on topics such as telemedicine, artificial intelligence and non-invasive imaging, among others.

“This year, several Fellows will tackle important research questions that contribute to health disparities among people of color,” said MRA Chief Science Officer Marc Hurlbert, PhD. “These projects will help improve artificial intelligence algorithms, raise awareness of melanoma among people of color and identify factors that can help clinicians stratify risk.”

Other awardees will study inherited mutations that increase risk for multiple melanomas, new ways to diagnose melanoma by studying fats in the body as well as other factors that contribute to melanoma metastasis. One award will support women in research while memorializing Grace Wenzel, a young melanoma advocate who succumbed to melanoma at the age of 23 in 2020.

“We are so grateful to the many donors who make MRA’s work possible,” says MRA President & CEO Michael Kaplan. “Without the vision and founding support of Denise and Michael Kellen and the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation, this program would not exist – and we are thrilled to have the returning support of the Polka Dot Mama Melanoma Foundation.”

2021 MRA Dermatology Fellowship Awardees

Germline Genetic Mutations in Patients with Multiple Primary Melanoma

Polka Dot Mama Melanoma Foundation – MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Audris Chiang M.D., Stanford University

Targeting Lipids for Melanoma Detection and Prevention

Grace Wenzel MRA Dermatology Fellows Award for Women in Melanoma Research

Marianne Collard Ph.D., Boston University School of Medicine

Leveraging Social Media to Augment Education on Melanoma in Hispanics

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Collin Costello M.D., Mayo Clinic Arizona

Novel Biomarkers and Treatment Strategies for Acral Lentiginous Melanomas

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Dekker Deacon M.D., Ph.D., The University of Utah

Targeted Advertising to Promote Melanoma Awareness Among Black Americans

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Isabella de Vere Hunt M.D., Stanford University

Multimedia Learning for Melanoma Prevention and Early Detection Education

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Carter Haag M.D., Oregon Health & Science University

Diagnosis of Melanoma Using Machine Learning and Confocal Microscopy

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Jonathan Kentley MBBS, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

Evaluating Acral Pigmented Lesions via AI Algorithms in Black Patients

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award on Skin of Color

Mariela Mitre M.D., Ph.D., Joan & Sanford I. Weill Medical College of Cornell University

Preventing Melanomagenesis Through Modulating HMGB1 Palmitoylation

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Zhipeng Tao Ph.D., Massachusetts General Hospital

Characterizing the Genomic Evolution of Acral Lentiginous Melanoma

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Meng Wang Ph.D., The University of California, San Francisco

Genomic Features of Primary Melanoma Predictive of Brain Metastasis

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Yujue Wang M.D., Ph.D, The University of California, Los Angeles

Molecular Alterations and Immunotherapy Responses in Acral Melanomas

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Jennifer Wiggins-Crosby Ph.D., New York University School of Medicine

Distant Metastasis by Early ALM in Patients with Skin of Color

MRA Dermatology Fellows Award

Zhentaoyang Ph.D., The University of California, Los Angeles

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About Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA)

Founded in 2007 under the auspices of the Milken Institute, with the generous support of Debra and Leon Black, the Melanoma Research Alliance exists to accelerate treatment options and find a cure for melanoma. As the largest nonprofit funder of melanoma research, it has dedicated over \$131 million and leveraged an additional

\$415 million in collaborative and follow-on funding towards its mission. Through its support, MRA has championed revolutions in immunotherapy, targeted therapies, novel combinations and diagnostics. Due to the ongoing support of its founders, 100 percent of donations to MRA go directly to its melanoma research program. MRA's ability to fund wide-ranging research in melanoma is amplified by unique collaborations and partnerships with individuals, private foundations, and corporations. Visit <http://www.CureMelanoma.org> for more information.

Additional Media Contact:

Anreder & Company

917.923.7011

Steven S. Anreder -- steven.anreder@anreder.com Michael Wichman -- michael.wichman@anreder.com