



A preview of melanoma discoveries to come at ASCO 2012

Washington, DC, May 17, 2012 – For the third year in a row, melanoma research advances will be a highlight of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting, to be held June 1-5 in Chicago. ASCO's Annual Meeting is the premier conference focused on clinical cancer research and is attended by about 30,000 cancer physicians, scientists, advocates and representatives of industry and philanthropy. Many researchers supported by the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) will present and lead sessions discussing these new findings.

Last year was called "the year of melanoma" at the meeting by former ASCO President George W. Sledge as clinical breakthroughs that were presented their reflected transformative advances in the fight against the deadliest form of skin cancer. These advances led to FDA approval of two new treatments for patients with metastatic disease. 2012 is on track to be another banner year for exciting new progress in melanoma research, which is being accelerated by the significant investments by the MRA.

As a preview of melanoma findings to be presented at the 2012 meeting, ASCO yesterday released a series of abstracts including those on new treatment strategies using immunotherapies and molecularly targeted therapies. For example, results from a clinical trial of the immune checkpoint inhibitor, anti-PD-1, in melanoma patients will be presented by Dr. Stephen Hodi, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. As summarized in the abstract, this therapy shows great promise. Related to this work, MRA is funding a Team Science Award being led by Dr. Drew Pardoll and Dr. Suzanne Topalian of Johns Hopkins University and Dr. Lieping Chen of Yale University, to further the knowledge about the mechanisms underlying this therapy and to identify biomarkers to improve upon this approach. Dr. Topalian will present key findings during a major symposium at the meeting on June 2. In the area of molecularly targeted therapy, resistance mechanisms to BRAF inhibition will be presented by MRA-funded researcher Dr. Jeffrey Sosman of Vanderbilt University. These are just some examples of advances that demonstrate a strong continued focus on melanoma from the research community and indicators of progress towards new treatments and, ultimately, a cure.

Since its founding in 2007, MRA has awarded more than \$38 million to 97 research programs that hold the promise of turning scientific discoveries into tools and/or treatments for high risk individuals or melanoma patients. A particular area of emphasis for MRA's research program is the development of new therapeutic approaches for metastatic melanoma, including those that will be highlighted at ASCO.

ABOUT THE MELANOMA RESEARCH ALLIANCE

The Melanoma Research Alliance is a public charity formed in 2007 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. For more information, visit www.curemelanoma.org or contact:

CONTACT: Angelo Bouselli
Melanoma Research Alliance
202.336.8922
abouselli@curemelanoma.org