

# Melanoma

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## Research Alliance

### MRA APPLAUDS LATEST MELANOMA DRUG APPROVAL

**WASHINGTON, D.C., December 22, 2014** – The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) today welcomed news that the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) has granted approval to Bristol-Myers Squibb's new immunotherapy drug, Opdivo® (nivolumab), for the treatment of metastatic melanoma. It is the second anti-PD-1 drug, aimed at re-energizing a patient's protective immune response to cancer, to have earned FDA approval in the U.S. and the eighth new therapy approved for late-stage melanoma in the last 4 years.

"With this latest approval, we are continuing to build an arsenal of therapies for patients and their clinicians to use in the fight against deadly melanoma. Nivolumab's ability to engage a patient's immune system shows real potential to save the lives of late-stage melanoma patients who had little hope of survival just a few years ago," said **Wendy Selig, MRA President and CEO**. "We are energized by this continued progress as we redouble our efforts to defeat melanoma once and for all."

Immunotherapy is changing the landscape of cancer treatment by harnessing the power of the body's immune system. Impressively, nearly two-thirds of melanoma patients treated with nivolumab are alive after one year. With ongoing studies revealing the potential for anti-PD-1 therapies to be combined and enhanced, the future of melanoma treatment looks increasingly promising, said Ms. Selig. She noted that MRA has invested \$26 million in scientific studies of immunotherapies, with plans to fund more in the coming year.

"Immunotherapy is a relatively new weapon in the anti-cancer arsenal and takes advantage of the power of the immune system to not just fight infection but also attack cancer," said **Dr. Louise M. Perkins, MRA Chief Science Officer**. "While traditional cancer treatment like chemotherapy kills cells that are reproducing quickly, immunotherapy drugs like anti-PD-1 agents take a completely different approach. Melanoma research is a case study for the success of anti-PD-1 agents, demonstrating how checkpoint blockade antibodies like nivolumab release the brakes and energize the immune system to great benefit in some patients."

"The approval of nivolumab is the latest in a string of advances generated by the scientific research and clinical development leaders in the field," said **Debra Black, MRA Co-Founder and Chair of the Board**. "When we started MRA 7 years ago, there was little hope for patients with advanced melanoma. Now we are in an amazing time of discovery and progress with new treatments that can save lives, not only for people with melanoma but also those with other diseases. Melanoma is really leading the way."

Since MRA's launch in 2007, eight new therapies have been approved for the treatment of melanoma, drastically changing the outlook for patients. Melanoma research has energized the entire field of oncology, charting a new course in cancer treatment. Clinical studies of immunotherapies have already shown promising results in other forms of cancer such as bladder, blood and lung cancers, and the potential benefits of immunotherapies continue to guide future melanoma research.

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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. 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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