



**MELANOMA RESEARCH ALLIANCE AWARDS \$4.9 MILLION IN
RESEARCH GRANTS TO INVESTIGATORS AT 22 LABS**

**More than \$38 Million in Grants Awarded to Date to Speed Search
for Cure of Deadly Skin Cancer**

WASHINGTON, DC, April 24, 2012 – The Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA), the largest private funder of melanoma research, today announced that 22 researchers at leading academic research institutions around the world have been awarded grants to develop improved means to prevent, detect and treat deadly skin cancer.

This latest round of awards brings the total awarded by MRA in its five year history to more than \$38 million, provided to 134 investigators at 65 institutions in 10 countries. MRA, which directs 100% of all public donations it receives to research, has awarded almost \$8 million in 2012 alone, including \$3 million awarded to the MRA-Stand Up to Cancer Melanoma Dream Team.

Among the areas of investigation being pursued by MRA's 2012 award recipients is the critical effort to advance existing therapies for metastatic melanoma, including the recently FDA-approved vemurafenib (for patients with BRAF mutant melanoma) and ipilimumab (an immunotherapy), which have extended the lives of some patients and ignited new optimism in the field of melanoma research. The aim of several of MRA's new grants is to prolong the effects of these approaches, including identification of resistance mechanisms and new biomarkers and testing drug combinations. Additionally, several of the grants are focused on finding new drug targets for those patients whose cancers are not driven by mutant BRAF (about 50% of all melanomas).

"The disturbing increase in incidence of melanoma, especially among young people, lends even greater urgency to finding new tools and treatments for a disease that every year is diagnosed among almost 80,000 people and is responsible for more than 9,000 deaths in the US alone," said Wendy K.D. Selig, President and CEO of MRA. "We are inspired by the exciting progress that is finally occurring in the field and delighted by the exceptional caliber of proposals, investigators, and institutions we are able to support through our 2012 grants."

"When we established MRA, in association with the Milken Institute, our goal was to fund the most promising research worldwide to defeat melanoma. The progress in recent years has been remarkable and we are committed to accelerating the pace of research until no one suffers or dies from this devastating disease," said Debra Black, MRA's Co-founder and Chair. "We are grateful to the scientists and those who are generously supporting our efforts because we know that no one organization can solve this problem alone."

These new awards include 13 Established Investigator Awards, two Pilot Awards, two Development Awards, five Young Investigator Awards, and an Academic-Industry Partnership Award. As in previous years, several of the 2012 Young Investigator Awards have been fully

sponsored by individual and corporate donors. In addition, this round of funding leverages investments by other organizations that share in our mission to accelerate cancer research, including the Melanoma Research Foundation, the American Association for Cancer Research, and the Safeway Foundation, which are co-supporting three of the Established Investigator Awards. The 2012 Academic-Industry Partnership Award, which will support the development of a new melanoma treatment, will be jointly sponsored by Altor BioScience Corporation.

“This new round of grant awards addresses critical issues in the prevention, detection, staging and treatment of melanoma that are central to making further clinical advances against this disease”, said MRA Chief Science Officer Dr. Suzanne L. Topalian. “This is a time of unprecedented opportunity in melanoma research, and these projects are anticipated to result in near-term benefits for patients.”

Awards were made to investigators at the following institutions, some of which received several awards in this round: Georgetown University; Boston University Medical Campus; Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine; Dana-Farber Cancer Institute; Dartmouth College; Johns Hopkins University; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research, Melbourne-Austin Branch; Massachusetts General Hospital; Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; Queensland Institute of Medical Research; Rockefeller University; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, San Francisco; University of Pennsylvania; University of Washington; Yale University School of Medicine.

A complete list of the awards and the individuals who received them is available at the MRA website, www.curemelanoma.org.

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:

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