



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MELANOMA RESEARCH ALLIANCE ADVANCES SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY, AWARDS
ADDITIONAL \$1 MILLION IN GRANTS TO
SUPPORT INNOVATIVE MELANOMA RESEARCH**

***Ongoing Investment Now Totals \$17 Million,
Supporting 44 Research Programs Worldwide***

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 20, 2010 – The Melanoma Research Alliance (“MRA”), committed to finding and funding the most promising melanoma research worldwide that will accelerate progress towards a cure, today announced awards totaling \$1 million in research grants to seven investigators pursuing innovative research in the U.S., the Netherlands and Israel. To date, the three-year-old organization has awarded multi-year grants totaling \$17 million supporting 44 projects.

“MRA is helping to foster a robust, collaborative melanoma research community focused on delivering effective results for patients and those at risk as quickly as possible,” said Wendy K.D., Selig, President and CEO of MRA. “We believe that better scientific understanding of melanoma will enable the development of effective treatments, including molecularly targeted therapies and immunotherapies that may be relevant and applicable to other kinds of cancers as well.”

Four of the seven new grant recipients qualified for ***Young Investigator Awards***, specifically designated to attract early career scientists with novel ideas into melanoma research, thereby recruiting and supporting the next generation of melanoma researchers.

This group of forward-thinking young investigators includes the recipient of the MRA’s inaugural sponsored award, *The Stewart Rahr-MRA Young Investigator Award*, granted to Raya Leibowitz-Amit, M.D., Ph.D., of Sheba Medical Center in Israel. This award is established through the generous support of Mr. Stewart Rahr, President and CEO of Kinray, Inc. based upon his commitment to accelerating melanoma science and encouraging early career scientists to focus their work in this field.

- **Raya Leibowitz-Amit, M.D., Ph.D.**, Oncologist and Researcher, Sheba Medical Center, Ramat Gan, Israel – “miRNA down-regulation in melanoma: Diagnostic and therapeutic implications”: Determining the role of micro-RNAs in melanoma progression and using this knowledge to accelerate a targeted therapy approach.

- **Michael Davies, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX – “Identifying therapeutic targets for melanoma brain metastases”: Improving the understanding of brain metastases on the molecular level and setting the stage for rational clinical trials.
- **Remco van Doorn, M.D., Ph.D.**, Dermatologist and Senior Researcher, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden, Netherlands – “Epigenomic analysis of melanoma metastatic behavior”: Improving the care of melanoma patients by examining altered gene methylation patterns to identify those who will need more aggressive treatment and follow-up versus those with a low risk of progression and recurrence.
- **Edwin Bremer, Ph.D.**, Fellow of the Dutch Cancer Society, University Medical Center Groningen, Groningen, Netherlands – “Counteracting metastatic spread and outgrowth by MCSP-targeted therapy”: Developing fusion proteins joining a melanoma-specific antibody fragment with other anti-melanoma compounds to create candidate drugs for the prevention of melanoma metastasis.

Two proposals received the *Established Investigator Award*, a program that supports senior investigators with an established record of scientific productivity and accomplishment to pursue innovative melanoma research proposals.

- **William W. Overwijk, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor, University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX – “Entrapment and deletion of melanoma-specific T cells at vaccination sites”: Developing improved therapeutic anti-melanoma vaccines with better trafficking of anti-melanoma killer cells.
- **Thomas Gajewski, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor, The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL – “Multi-peptide vaccination with or without IL-12 and Daclizumab”: Improving the efficacy of melanoma vaccines in patients through regulatory T cell depletion.

One *Development Award* was given, which tests potentially transformative ideas that do not contain extensive preliminary data, but that articulate a clear hypothesis and translational goals.

- **Svetomir N. Markovic, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor of Medicine, Mayo Clinic Rochester, Rochester, MN – “Angiogenesis inhibitors modulate systemic immunity in metastatic melanoma”: Enhancing immunotherapy following immune normalization with a VEGF inhibitor to significantly improve clinical outcomes in cancer patients.

“We continue to be encouraged by the quality of research proposals we receive during each grant cycle. The enthusiasm coming out of the science is palpable and it is inspiring to see energized and dedicated research and clinical communities pursuing new preventive,

diagnostic and therapeutic avenues that will benefit melanoma patients,” said Debra Black, founder and chair of the Melanoma Research Alliance.

More detailed information on MRA research programs is online at www.melanomaresearchalliance.org.

About the Melanoma Research Alliance

The Melanoma Research Alliance is a public charity formed under the auspices of the Milken Institute, with the initial 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 issues leading to better treatments and a cure for patients with melanoma. For more information, please visit: www.melanomaresearchalliance.org.

For more information, contact:

Cecilia Arradaza

P: 202-336-8912

E: CArradaza@fastercures.org