

# Melanoma Research Alliance



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## Mission

Founded in 2007, the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) is the largest private funder of melanoma research. MRA's mission is to accelerate the pace of scientific discovery and its translation into effective options for patients – in prevention, diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment – in order to eliminate suffering and death due to melanoma. MRA works to find a cure “by funding the most promising melanoma research worldwide that will accelerate progress and improve outcomes for patients and all who are at risk.” Thanks to the ongoing support of founders Debra and Leon Black, 100 percent of public donations to MRA goes directly to research.

## Strategy/Approach

MRA focuses its activities in three core areas:

- **Research investment** – MRA funds individual investigators, collaborative team science, and academic-industry partnerships in the areas of prevention, diagnosis and staging, and treatment.
- **Active collaboration** – Collaboration is core to MRA's efforts. MRA partners with individuals and organizations across the academic, nonprofit, and corporate arenas, and emphasizes taking a team approach to research. MRA also engages in unique co-funding efforts with other foundations.
- **Policy advancement** – MRA works with policymakers at the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Congress to advocate for innovative new treatments and focused resources for melanoma research.

## Research Portfolio

To date, MRA has awarded nearly \$51 million to 169 investigators, including research in biological causes of carcinogenesis, skin screening, biomarkers, imaging, immunotherapy, molecularly targeted therapy, and combination therapy. Its portfolio of awards includes:

- **Young Investigator Awards** – Fund early-career scientists with novel ideas
  - \$75,000/year for three years
- **Pilot Awards** – Test potentially transformative ideas, high-risk, high reward projects important to establish proof-of-concept
  - \$50,000/year for two years
- **Development Award** – Subtype of a Pilot Award in which one year of funding is provided to test potentially transformative "high-risk, high-reward" ideas that do not have extensive preliminary data but would establish proof-of-concept.
  - \$50,000/year

- **Established Investigator Awards** – Support investigators with an established track record
  - Up to \$125,000/year for two to three years
- **Team Science Awards** – Promote multidisciplinary melanoma research advances; these account for almost three-fourths of MRA's research funding
  - Up to \$1 million total over two to three years
- **Academic-Industry Partnership Awards** – Foster cross-sector collaboration between academia and industry
  - Up to \$200,000/year plus matching support from the partner organization

## Partnership Practices

MRA engages in corporate, academic, and nonprofit alliances.

### MRA partners with biotech and pharmaceutical companies.

It has awarded two grants through the academic/industry partnership awards, which are co-funded by MRA and an industrial collaborator:

- **Enhancing melanoma specific T cell function by CD27 stimulation** – A collaboration between the University of Virginia and Celldex, the maker of an antibody that blocks molecules that put the brakes on the immune response, focused on a Phase I clinical trial to test the safety of the antibody.
- **Comprehensive diagnostic imaging system for melanoma detection** – A partnership between Canfield Scientific, Inc., a leading provider of dermatology photography services, and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center to leverage recent technological advances to develop a new imaging solution.

## Financials

MRA is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. The most recent financial information available is from 2012.<sup>1</sup>

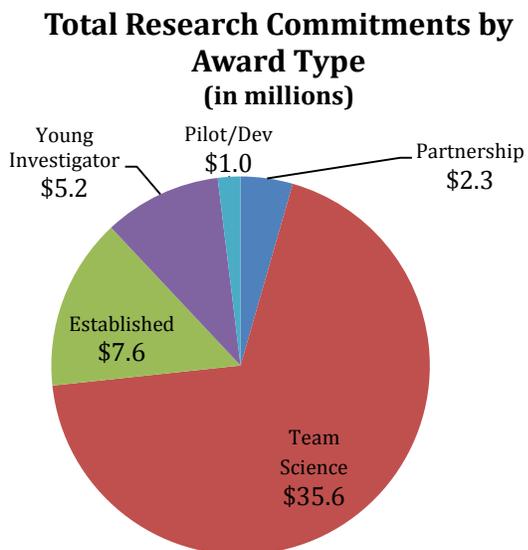
Year ending 12/31/12:

- Revenue: \$8,623,253
- Expenses: \$9,268,269
- Assets: \$30,877,458
- Medical Research Grants: \$6,815,067

<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from MRA Financial Statements.  
<http://www.curemelanoma.org/about-mra/financials/>

## Key Accomplishments

- To date, MRA has awarded \$51 million to 121 research programs. This includes principal investigators across 14 countries (Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Israel,



Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States).

- To date, significant progress was made by MRA awardees, including:
  - *More than \$46 million in additional research funding leveraged from other sources by MRA investigators.*
  - *18 clinical trials supported by MRA to test promising agents alone and in combination for the treatment of metastatic melanoma.*
  - *17 patent applications filed for development of new technology.*
  - *More than 145 collaborations initiated and strengthened among academic, government, and industry scientists.*
  - *More than 100 papers published by MRA-funded investigators in high-impact journals describing MRA-supported research.*
  - *Approximately 450 presentations delivered by MRA investigators at medical and scientific meetings.*
- MRA has been featured by Loreal, American Idol Live! 2013, and others as their designated philanthropy.
- Through a unique partnership with Bruce Springsteen and the Danny Fund, MRA has been engaged in a series of public awareness initiatives urging people to protect themselves from the sun's damaging rays, avoid indoor tanning, and be aware of changes in their skin.
- MRA is currently working with FDA and Health and Human Services to implement tanning bed bans in the United States.

## Leadership

MRA is governed by a **Board of Directors** and relies on its **Scientific Advisory Panel**, **Medical Advisory Panel**, and **Grant Review Committee** for counsel on related matters and policies.

- **President and CEO:** Wendy Selig, [wselig@curemelanoma.org](mailto:wselig@curemelanoma.org)
- **Chief Science Officer:** Louise M. Perkins, PhD, [lperkins@curemelanoma.org](mailto:lperkins@curemelanoma.org)
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