MRF Melanoma Research Foundation

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SPOTlight

NEWSLETTER



Use Your Voice to Advance Melanoma Research

Each year, we seek patients and caregivers to participate in the Foundation's grant review process. Being a patient advocate grant reviewer means that you can give your voice to the research process as ultimately, patients and caregivers are directly impacted by the advancements made in the laboratory. There has never been a more important time than now for our community to participate in the research process. As the research community navigates uncertainty in traditional research funding, the support of patient advocacy organizations has never been more necessary.

Since 1975, there have been 20 FDA-approved treatments for melanoma – prior to 2011, there were only 3 FDA-approved treatments for melanoma. We cannot slow the process of getting more treatment options to patients and your voice plays a critical role in that. If you would like to apply to be an advocate reviewer, please click here.

This is an opportunity that is completely virtual but allows you to give back in one of the most impactful ways.

Kyleigh M. LiPira, MBA

CEO

Apply Today

Announcing

Announcing the MRF Rebrand and Revamped Website

This month, the MRF officially unveiled a new brand with a refreshed design motif, a new logo and a revamped website. The rebrand and website revamp denotes the Foundation's continued commitment to bolstering educational resources, support and advocacy for the melanoma community and is a direct result of hearing from you – melanoma patients, thrivers, caregivers, clinicians and supporters!

The revamped website, still accessible via www.melanoma.org, includes many exciting features including a more streamlined navigation that allows visitors to self-identify and easily locate resources and programs pertinent to them. It encourages more community engagement through the Patient Forum and allows for a more simplified donor experience.

We invite you to visit our revamped website and provide your feedback by reaching out to marketing@melanoma.org. Though the MRF has a new look and feel, our commitment and mission remain the same – to eradicate melanoma by accelerating medical research while educating and advocating for the melanoma community.

Visit our Revamped Website!



Hear from Patient/Advocate, Dave Bernstein, on the Importance of Advocacy Days and Why You Should Register for This Year's Event!

Click here to watch Dave's full video testimonial about his melanoma journey and why he encourages all to attend Advocacy Days!

To view all of our patient testimonials from last year's event, click here.

Engage in the state and federal policies impacting the melanoma community and **register for this year's Advocacy Days by February 1** and join us on Capitol Hill. Registering by the February 1 deadline gives you a better chance of having a meeting with your state and district lawmakers' office, a crucial step in advocating for the needs of the melanoma community. Early registration is essential to maximizing our collective impact.

Patients, caregivers and advocates have a powerful opportunity to share their personal stories with lawmakers, pushing for increased federal funding for melanoma research and improved access to treatment. Don't miss your chance to join the MRF and make a difference—register today.

Register Today



Patient and Donor Corner – LaShelle Rabold

Despite having olive skin and never experiencing sunburns, LaShelle believed she was safe from skin cancer. For years, she skipped sunscreen and used tanning beds for a "base tan." In 2021, life took a dramatic turn when a small spot on her leg, previously dismissed by dermatologists, developed into Stage IIIA melanoma. Following surgery, lymph node removal and a year of immunotherapy, she continues regular scans and dermatologist visits. This emotional and life-changing journey transformed her into a passionate advocate for skin health. Through sharing her story and leading Team Rabold at this year's Fort Myers Miles for Melanoma 5K event, she encourages others to prioritize sun safety and schedule skin checks. Her mission is clear: to help others avoid what ignorance nearly cost her. Stay shady! Click below to read her full story.

Read Full Story

Kicking Off the 2025 Miles for Melanoma Season!



In 2024, over 6,600 participants across 17 cities came together to honor melanoma patients, thrivers and caregivers, raising more than $1.2 million for life-saving melanoma research, education and advocacy. Now, we're back and ready for another impactful year!

Join us for the season opener on Sunday, February 9, at Zoo Miami in sunny Miami, FL! Plus, stay tuned—registration for Washington, DC (May 3) and New England, MA (May 10) opens soon. Find a run/walk near you and mark your calendar: Together, we'll run, walk and raise critical funds to cure melanoma.

Learn More



Last Chance to Register for the February Pediatric Melanoma Family Retreat Weekend!

Join us for a FREE, fun-filled weekend getaway designed for families impacted by pediatric melanoma. From February 21–23, we're heading to Camp Boggy Creek in sunny Florida—the perfect winter getaway to connect with other families, and enjoy a weekend of support, education and adventure.

This special retreat is open to pediatric melanoma patients (ages 5–17), their siblings and caregivers. Families will experience:

- Expert-led educational sessions from top healthcare providers
- Exciting camp activities like archery, boating and fishing
- Meaningful connections with others who understand their journey

Have questions? Contact us at education@melanoma.org for more details.

Take a sneak peek! Watch this short video for a glimpse into a weekend at Camp Boggy Creek.

We're excited to welcome you and your families.

Register Today



Board Welcomes Dr. Rebecca Hartman, Dr. Michelle Henry and Patty Pophal

In January, the Board of Directors appointed three new members, Rebecca Hartman, MD, MPH, Michelle Henry, MD, FAAD and Patty Pophal, who have been longtime advocates for the

melanoma community.

Rebecca Hartman, MD, MPH is dedicated to patient care, clinical innovation, research and education with a focus on skin cancer, and currently works in outpatient clinical activities as well as clinical research, education and administration. She currently has clinical sessions at Dana Farber Cancer Institute, specializing in melanoma care for patients and the VA Boston Healthcare System where she sees a high-risk skin cancer population. Dr. Hartman also serves as the Director of Melanoma Epidemiology at Brigham and Women's Hospital. She has served on the MRF's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) and the Dermatology Alliance Council (DAC) and received an MRF Career Development Award for her research on "the impact of Covid-19 on Melanoma Patients."

Michelle Henry, MD, FAAD is a board-certified dermatologist and dermatologic surgeon renowned as an international speaker, trainer and author. She is the CEO and Founder of Skin & Aesthetic Surgery of Manhattan and the Founder of The Henry Research Group. Dr. Henry also serves as Clinical Instructor of Dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College. Her clinical focus includes high-risk skin cancer treatment solutions, cosmetic surgery, hair loss solutions and skin rejuvenation techniques, particular for diverse skin types. Last year, she became an on-air contributor for The TODAY Show. Dr. Henry was pivotal in helping to establish the MRF's Skin of Color Institute and in 2022, was honored to receive the 21st Annual New York Gala Excellence in Prevention award and has served as a Gala co-chair in 2023 and 2024.

Patty Pophal is a Senior Accountant at KMSH, an accounting firm in Cleveland, OH, and has extensive experience in providing accounting and tax services to small privately held companies and individuals. Patty has been involved with the MRF since 2017. Her daughter, Grace, was diagnosed with melanoma in 2015 with Stage IV melanoma. Grace was always active and wanted to participate in a walk when she was well enough, and found the Miles for Melanoma event in Columbus, OH after a donation was made in her honor forming Team Grace – the largest team and funds raised for the event. In 2018, Patty requested the event be moved to Cleveland and has chaired the event ever since. Today, Cleveland ranks #1 in attendance and funds raised. Sadly, Grace lost her battle with melanoma in 2023. Patty continues to be a champion and advocate for advancing melanoma medical research and continues to lead the Cleveland Miles for Melanoma event.

We thank the Board of Directors for their dedication to the melanoma community and helping to define the mission, vision and values of the MRF. Read the full announcement here.

View the MRF Board



Exciting News for the Melanoma Community: FDA Approves Opdivo Qvantig

The melanoma community welcomed a significant advancement on December 27, 2024, as the FDA approved Opdivo Qvantig—a new option for treating various adult solid tumors, including melanoma. Unlike the traditional IV infusion, which can take up to 30 minutes, this version is administered via a simple subcutaneous injection in just 3 to 5 minutes.

This development represents a meaningful step toward improving the treatment experience for patients. Clinical studies confirmed that Opdivo Qvantig delivers the same effectiveness and safety as the IV option, offering a faster and more convenient approach without compromising care.

Innovations like this underscore the ongoing progress in melanoma treatment and support the community's shared hope for easier, effective solutions. Patients are encouraged to speak with their care teams to explore whether Opdivo Qvantig is a suitable option. Read more in the official press release from Bristol Myers Squibb below.

Read Full Press Release

Upcoming Events

February 9: Miami Miles for Melanoma

February 21-23: Pediatric Melanoma Family Retreat Weekend

March 2-4: Advocacy Days

April 5: Fred Hutch Cancer Center Patient Symposium

April 7: UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center Patient Symposium

April 26-27: Cleveland Clinic CURE OM Symposium

In the News

FDA Approves Opdivo Qvantig Injection, for Subcutaneous Use in Most Previously Approved Adult, Solid Tumor Opdivo Indications - *Bristol Myers Squibb*

A grim prognosis, a gamble and one patient's fight to defy cancer - *The Washington Post*

Replimune Announces Biologics License Application Acceptance and Priority Review for RP1 for the Treatment of Advanced Melanoma - *Replimune*

What to Expect at a Skin Cancer

Screening - *TIME*

Skin Cancer Prevention Stories from the Field - *CDC*

5 Skin Cancer Pictures to Help Guide Your Mole Checks - *Prevention*

Jimmy Carter Was "A Tremendous Advocate for Cancer Education and Prevention" - *Cancer Health*

"Below Deck Down Under" captain reveals melanoma diagnosis, encourages sun protection - *MSN*



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The Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) is leading the melanoma community to transform melanoma from one of the deadliest cancers to one of the most treatable through research, education and advocacy.

The Melanoma Research Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

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