MRF Melanoma Research Foundation



Scientific progress depends on diversity of thought, experience and perspective. Yet across the global research ecosystem, women remain underrepresented—particularly at senior levels and in funding pipelines. Today, women represent about one-third of researchers globally. In melanoma research, where innovation directly translates into lives saved, addressing these disparities is not just an equity issue; it is a scientific imperative.

Women's share of research grants has grown in recent years but still lags their overall representation in the research workforce. The result is not only a loss of opportunity for individual scientists—but a loss for science itself. Diverse research teams have been consistently linked to greater creativity, broader inquiry and more impactful discoveries.

Melanoma is a complex and evolving disease that demands bold, innovative approaches. Ensuring that talented scientists—regardless of gender—have access to funding and opportunity is essential to accelerating breakthroughs in prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

The MRF has long recognized this need. Since 1998, the MRF has invested more than $28 million in melanoma research, supporting investigators at every stage of their careers—from trainees to established leaders.

The MRF funds women in science ranging from one-year medical student grants through dynamic team science awards granted to multiple institutions and disciplines. In fact, through the generosity of donors, the MRF has specifically funded 3 Women in Science Awards to:

- Lilit Karapetyan, MD at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute, for the project "Deciphering the role of APRIL/TNFSF13 in melanoma-associated TLS formation." As a result of her work through this MRF grant, Dr. Karapetyan garnered 2 new collaborations and $400,000 in new funding from the Department of Defense to further continue her research.
- Allison Betof, MD, PhD at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center for the project "Pilot Trial of Tumor Infiltrating Lymphocytes for Melanoma Brain Metastasis." This grant supported Dr. Betof's work, leading to 10 presentations, the development of 1 clinical trial and an additional $500,000 in new funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO).
- Yangpeiwei Huang, PhD at the University of California, San Francisco, for the project "Targeted intervention of melanoma by reprogramming the stromal translatome." This grant supported Dr. Huang's efforts to pursue 2 presentations at major academic conferences and 1 new collaboration.

Continued investment into the MRF Research Program, particularly for women investigators, is critical. Every dollar invested helps:

- Launch the careers of promising scientists, including women entering the field
- Fuel innovative, high-impact research

- Fuel innovative, high-impact research
- Accelerate the development of new treatments and cures

By supporting the MRF, donors and partners are not only advancing melanoma research—they are helping to build a more inclusive, dynamic and effective scientific community.

Donate Today

Kyleigh LiPira, MBA

CEO

2026 MRFBC Team Science and Pediatric Established Investigator Awardees



James Mulé, PhD

H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute

MRFBC Team Science Awardee



Elena Hawryluk, MD, PhD

Massachusetts General Hospital

Pediatric Established Investigator Awardee

Congratulations to the MRFBC Team Science and Pediatric Established Investigator Awardees

We are proud to announce the recipients of this year's MRF Breakthrough Consortium (MRFBC) Team Science Award and the Pediatric Established Investigator Award. James Mulé, PhD of H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute received the MRFBC Team Science Award for his work to improve immune response in melanoma. Elena Hawryluk, MD, PhD of Massachusetts General Hospital received the Pediatric Established Investigator Award for her research exploring the genetic landscape of pediatric melanoma to support earlier detection.

The Pediatric Established Investigator Award is made possible through the generous support of Elizabeth Schreiber, John Bowlin, John McCarthy, Mark Bernier, Neiman Marcus at the request of 2019 #GetNaked spokesperson Dayanara Torres, Nick and Marybeth DeFabrizio, Peter and Anne Foley, Portia Antonia Alexis of TheSolveMD, Steve Silverstein, Tom Westdyk and supporters of the 23rd Annual New York City Gala.

Meet the Grantees



The 2025 Annual Report: Reflecting on the Impact of Your Generosity

As the largest independent organization dedicated to the melanoma community, we are able to drive meaningful impact thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors. Whether you are a one-time or recurring donor, your support enables the MRF to drive progress by supporting melanoma education, research and advocacy. Guided by the principles of responsible stewardship, Volume 09 of the Annual Stewardship Report highlights the remarkable achievements we accomplished in 2025. Click below to explore the report and discover how your support helps propel the MRF's mission.

View Full Stewardship Report



Advocating for the

Advocating for the Melanoma Community on Capitol Hill



In early March, over 70 nationwide advocates representing melanoma patients, thrivers, caregivers, researchers and providers descended upon the nation's capital for the 16th annual Advocacy Days program. This year's advocates held nearly 50 congressional meetings and represented 22 states and all melanoma subtypes including cutaneous (skin), ocular, mucosal, acral lentiginous and pediatric/AYA melanomas.

Advocacy Days is a program vital to the MRF's mission and reflects our deep commitment to ensuring that the voices of those impacted by melanoma are heard. As federal funding cuts to cancer research continue, it is now more important than ever that melanoma advocates impress upon lawmakers about the imperative need to support innovative research for the betterment of our community. We thank our corporate partners including Merck, Pfizer, Kenvue, Bristol Myers Squibb and Iovance Biotherapeutics for their support of the Advocacy Days Program.

View Advocacy Days Photo Album

Education Corner



Ask the Expert Recap: Advancing Cell-Based Immunotherapy in Melanoma Throughout the Years

This month, the MRF hosted an Ask the Expert webinar exploring the past, present and future of cell-based immunotherapy in melanoma. Leading experts shared how these innovative treatments have evolved, key scientific breakthroughs and what's ahead for improving patient outcomes and reducing side effects. The session also featured a powerful mucosal melanoma patient perspective, highlighting the real-world impact of these emerging therapies on a rare melanoma subtype.

Watch Now

RSVP for Upcoming Together Against Melanoma: Patient & Caregiver Symposia Events!



We are thrilled to invite you to our upcoming Together Against Melanoma: Patient & Caregiver Symposia series, bringing together leading melanoma experts, patients, caregivers and community members. These events offer a unique opportunity to learn about the latest advancements in melanoma research and treatment, connect with others navigating similar experiences and hear directly from experts and patient voices.

Learn More and RSVP Below:

• April 6: UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer

• May 2: Fred Hutch Cancer Center: Northwest Melanoma Symposium: Science to Survivorship

• May 9: The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center

• May 12: Yale Cancer Center Patient & Caregiver Symposium

From clinical updates to personal stories, the symposia series offers a meaningful opportunity to learn, ask questions and connect with others who understand the melanoma journey. Breakfast, lunch and refreshments will be provided.

Share Your Voice: Brain Metastases Survey

We are proud to partner with the American Brain Tumor Association on a survey focused on the needs of those living with brain metastases or leptomeningeal disease.

For individuals impacted by melanoma brain metastases, this is an opportunity to help highlight the unique needs of the melanoma community and inform future support, resources and care. If you or a loved one has been affected, consider sharing your experience.

Take the Survey Here

Miles for Melanoma Donor Highlight

Jen Powell from Team Jen-uinely Shares Why She Participates in the DC Miles for Melanoma 5K



Join us on Saturday, May 9 for the highly anticipated DC Miles for Melanoma 5K at Yards Park. Jen Powell from Team Jen-uinely shares why she participates:

"I participate in Miles for Melanoma because I am so grateful for the MRF and their work that helped save my life. I had a stage 1 melanoma removed from my thigh when I was 28. It returned the year I turned 50, making itself known in a nearby lymph node that became enlarged. Stage 3B. Because of immunotherapy, I recently reached the 2-year mark with no evidence of disease. The Miles for Melanoma 5K provides me the opportunity to give back!"

If you are interested in making a donation to her team, click here.



The Miles for Melanoma 5K Season Starts Soon!

We're less than a month and a half from kicking off another incredible Miles for Melanoma 5K season, and we can't wait to come together with our community. It all begins this May in Washington, DC on May 9 at Yards Park, marking the start of a powerful season of impact, awareness and connection.

Registration is already open for upcoming events in New England, MA on May 16 and Denver, CO on June 13, with many more cities to follow throughout the summer. Visit the Miles homepage and explore our event map to see where we're headed and find a 5K near you!

Find a 5K Near You!

Highlights from the American Academy of Dermatology Conference



This month, the MRF attended the American Academy of Dermatology Conference (AAD) and

hosted its annual in-person Dermatology Alliance Council (DAC) meeting. The DAC meeting convened leading dermatologists and melanoma experts to share the latest updates in innovative research and patient care.

Speakers discussed important topics such as adolescent and young adult (AYA) melanoma needs, new blood-based methods for monitoring metastatic disease and advances in using machine learning to understand genetic melanoma risk. The group also explored how to improve patient surveillance by ensuring dermatologists are available where they're needed most. The session concluded with opportunities for questions and connections to support ongoing collaboration that benefits melanoma patients and families. Thank you to our co-chairs, Veronica Rotemberg, MD, PhD and MRF board member Rebecca Hartman, MD and to our meeting facilitators, Mackenzie Wehner, MD (pictured below right), and Susan Swetter, MD (pictured below left).



We thank our partners including Castle Biosciences, Neutrogena, Elta MD and TiZO for their generous sponsorship of the annual DAC meeting.



CommUNITY Fundraising Driving Breakthroughs in Melanoma Research

Last month, MRF Board Chair Doug Brodman and his wife, Terry, hosted their fifth fundraiser in Naples, FL, raising over $125,250, totaling $425,250 raised since its inception. These funds support young melanoma investigators—fueling meaningful breakthroughs, from identifying promising immune cells linked to improved patient outcomes to advancing clinical trials that enhance TIL therapy for advanced melanoma.

This year, proceeds will support two MRF Breakthrough Consortium Pilot Awards, which will be granted later this year and continue driving innovative research forward.

Community fundraising remains one of the most powerful ways to make an impact. Whether you're passionate about hosting an event or joining an existing one, there are countless ways to support melanoma research, education and advocacy and we're here to help every step of the way.

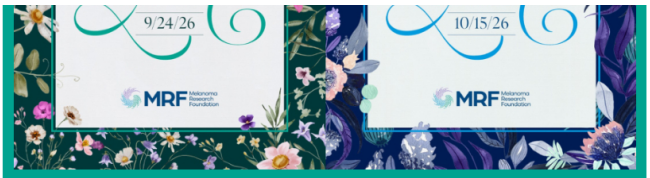
Upcoming CommUNITY Fundraisers Include:

- **13th Annual Shoopy Scramble Charity Golf Tournament** on April 19 at Desert Willow in Palm Desert, CA
- **SPF 5K – Shield, Prevent, Fight** on April 25 at Walsingham Park Pavilion in Largo, FL
- **Stay Out of the Sun Run** on May 8 at Cascade Lake Park in Rochester, MN

Join us and be part of the momentum driving change.

Learn More





Save the Dates—Two Unforgettable Anniversary Nights are on the Horizon!

Join us for the 15th Annual Denver Gala at Asterisk on Thursday, September 24, and the 25th Annual New York Gala at our new venue, Guastavino's, on Thursday, October 15!

These signature events bring together passionate supporters, leaders and advocates for evenings that go beyond celebration, fueling progress in melanoma research and driving meaningful change for the entire community.

From a vibrant cocktail reception and open bar to a thoughtfully curated dinner and powerful program, every moment is designed to inspire and make an impact.

Be part of something bigger this year. Click below to learn more, purchase a ticket, explore sponsorship opportunities or make a donation if you are unable to attend in person!

Get Your Tickets Here



Spotlight Event: #GetNakedJax Returns This Fall

We're just 7 months away from one of Jacksonville's most anticipated nights of impact—the 6th Annual #GetNakedJax on October 22 at TPC Sawgrass.

This year, we're excited to welcome back The Band Be Easy, a crowd favorite who has helped bring the energy to this event year after year. Their return promises another unforgettable night filled with music, connection and purpose.

More than just a celebration, #GetNakedJax brings the community together to support one powerful mission: funding groundbreaking melanoma research. This signature event continues to drive meaningful progress while offering an incredible experience featuring craft cocktails, an elevated dining experience and a vibrant, purpose-driven crowd. Tickets will be available soon so stay tuned. In the meantime, explore sponsorship opportunities and be part of the impact!

Become a Sponsor

Upcoming Events

April 6: Together Against Melanoma: UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center Patient & Caregiver Symposium

April 17-19: Eyes on a Cure: Ocular Melanoma Patient & Caregiver Symposium

April 19: CommUNITY Fundraiser: 13th Annual Shoopy Scramble Charity Golf Tournament

April 25: CommUNITY Fundraiser: SPF 5K - Shield, Prevent, Fight

May 2: Fred Hutch Cancer Center: 2026 Northwest Melanoma Symposium: Science to Survivorship

May 8: Stay Out of the Sun Run

May 9: DC Miles for Melanoma 5K

In the News

Troy Regional's Whitney Barron advocates for Melanoma Awareness — *The Messenger*

Skin Health Campaign Launches Nationwide — *PR Newswire*

Jam For Cam Poised To Pack Downtown Athens With 20,000 Music Fans — *Hoodline*

At street level: Jam In The Streets brings live music and philanthropy to Athens - *The Red & Black*

Therapeutic Resistance and High-Risk Subsets in Advanced Melanoma - *Targeted Oncology*

ctDNA Testing is Valuable in Melanoma Detection and Surveillance, Surveyed Experts Say - *Cancer Therapy Advisor*

May 9: Together Against Melanoma: The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center Patient & Caregiver Symposium

May 12: Together Against Melanoma: Yale Cancer Center Patient & Caregiver Symposium

May 16: New England Miles for Melanoma 5K

June 13: Denver Miles for Melanoma 5K

Adjuvant Pembrolizumab Maintains Benefit-Risk Profile for High-Risk Stage II Melanoma in KEYNOTE-716 Analysis - *AJMC*



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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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