MRF Melanoma Research Foundation





Every September 30th, Rare Cancer Day brings global awareness to the many cancer types that, while individually uncommon, collectively impact millions of lives. At the MRF, this day holds particular meaning as we continue to drive progress for the rarer forms of melanoma—including ocular, mucosal, acral lentiginous and pediatric melanoma—through funding and accelerating medical research, providing educational resources and support and advocating for the community at the federal and state level.

Driving Research for Rare Melanomas

Rare melanomas pose unique challenges in diagnosis, treatment and outcomes. The MRF remains at the forefront of confronting these challenges by investing directly in scientific innovation. To date, we've awarded nearly $4 million in rare melanoma research funding, supporting 46 grants across leading academic institutions throughout the United States. These grants specifically target the biology, treatment and clinical management of the rare melanomas, addressing critical gaps in understanding and care.

Through this investment, the MRF empowers researchers to explore promising new therapies, investigate genetic and molecular drivers of rare melanoma subtypes and ultimately improve outcomes for patients who have limited standard treatment options.

Educating and Empowering the Rare Melanoma Community

Research is only part of the equation. The MRF is also deeply committed to educating and providing resources to rare melanoma patients, caregivers and healthcare professionals and raising public awareness around the rare melanomas. Our robust library of on-demand Ask the Expert webinars and educational materials ensures the rare melanoma community has access to the latest insights on disease management, clinical trials and patient support.

We encourage everyone to explore these resources through the MRF's Education Institute, including:

- On-Demand 'Ask the Expert' Webinars
- Patient & Caregiver Guides
- Specialized Content for Rare Melanoma Subtypes

Spotlight on the MRF's CURE OM Initiative: A Beacon of Hope for Ocular Melanoma Patients

The CURE OM initiative is the MRF's signature program focused on the most common eye cancer in adults, ocular melanoma, diagnosed in approximately 2,000 Americans each year. Since its inception, CURE OM has united patients, researchers and clinicians to elevate awareness, fund innovative research and advocate for systemic change.

Through CURE OM, we continue to advance ocular melanoma science while fostering a supportive and informed patient community.

Learn more about CURE OM here.

Advocating for Federal Funding for Rare Melanoma Research

Our impact doesn't stop at the lab or the lecture hall. The MRF is a strong voice on Capitol Hill, advocating for federal research funding through programs like the Melanoma Research Program (MRP) within the Department of Defense's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP).

Thanks to the efforts of MRF advocates, the MRP has become a vital lifeline for rare melanoma research, enabling critical studies that may not otherwise receive funding. This Rare Cancer Day, we renew our call for policymakers to prioritize rare cancer research and continue supporting programs that fuel lifesaving discoveries.

To get involved in our advocacy efforts, visit the MRF Advocacy Center.

Every Voice Matters

Rare Cancer Day is a reminder that every voice, every discovery and every act of advocacy matters. The MRF stands with every patient, family member, clinician and researcher committed to ending melanoma—rare or common. Together, we are shaping a future where rare does not mean forgotten. To make a tax-deductible donation to specifically support a loved one battling a rarer form of melanoma click below.

Donate Today!



Kyleigh LiPira, MBA

CEO

Announcing the Launch of SunAWARE™



This month, the MRF officially launched SunAWARE™– a free dynamic gamified sun safety e-learning pilot curriculum program designed for children in grades K-5. SunAWARE™ teaches children lifelong sun-safe habits to help prevent cutaneous (skin) melanoma and other skin cancers with a goal of building a future where prevention is second nature.

SunAWARE™ was created by public health educators and backed by melanoma survivors, advocates and dermatologists. The interactive curriculum is available to teachers, parents, coaches and health advocates who wish to instill critical melanoma prevention and sun safety lessons in our youth. We know that sun safe practices that begin in childhood are the best way to ensure we prevent melanoma in adults!

To help disseminate SunAWARE™ nationwide, we have also launched a SunAWARE™ Ambassador Program that mobilizes advocates to bring sun safety education into schools, classrooms, camps and communities. You can learn more about the Ambassador Program, here - SunAWARE Resources – Melanoma Research Foundation.

Learn more about SunAWARE™ and request access to the program at www.melanoma.org/SunAWARE. Together, we can empower children nationwide to be sun safe, every day with SunAWARE!

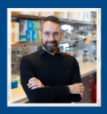
Explore SunAWARE

Announcing the 2025 MRF Career Development, Established Investigator and MRFBC Pilot Awardees

Career Development Awardees



Dan Erkes, PhD



Daniel Hirschhon, PhD



Kenneth Hu, PhD



Mathieu Desaunay, PhD



Mona Foth, PhD

Established Investigator Awardees



Craig Ceol, PhD



Emily Bernstein, PhD



Lisa Cannon-Albright, PhD



Thorsten Mempel, MD, PhD

MRF Breakthrough Consortium Pilot Translational Awardee



Hee Won Yang, PhD

We are pleased to announce and congratulate the newest MRF awardees including: five Career Development Awards (CDA), four Established Investigator Awards (EIA) and the MRFBC Pilot Translational Award. These awards will enable researchers across the nation to explore a range of innovative topics such as earlier diagnosis of lethal melanoma, pioneering therapies for acral and mucosal melanoma, new strategies to address melanoma drug resistance and more. Through the MRF's research and science grant program, we have awarded more than $28 million in peer-reviewed research grants to date. This funding is critical to advancing treatment progress for the melanoma community.

Learn More About Our Funded Research

Apply Today for 2026 Melanoma Research Funding Opportunities

The MRF is deeply committed to supporting groundbreaking research. Applications are now open for our 2026 research funding opportunities, supporting investigators at every career stage.

Current opportunities include: Medical Student Research Grants, MRF Breakthrough Consortium (MRFBC) Team Award, Pediatric Melanoma Established Investigator Award, Established Investigator Award (EIA) and Career Development Award (CDA)

Applications must be submitted via Proposal Central by October 31, 2025, at 11:59pm ET.

Learn More



One Month Away: Secure Your Tickets to the New York Gala!

We're thrilled to welcome the melanoma community to the 24th Annual New York Gala on Thursday, October 30 at Cipriani Broadway — an unforgettable evening dedicated to celebrating progress, honoring champions and fueling the fight against melanoma. Guests will enjoy an elegant cocktail reception, a gourmet dinner, a "Chance to Win," an exciting live auction, and a powerful awards program recognizing extraordinary contributions across the melanoma community.

This year, we are proud to honor Tate Edwards Kirk, MD, with the CURE OM Vision of Hope Award for his exemplary patient care, groundbreaking research and scientific leadership. Delcath Systems, Inc. will receive the Corporate Leadership Award for their longstanding commitment to sun safety and skin health. Shereene Idriss, MD, will be

presented with the Influencer Award for her innovative use of social media to raise melanoma awareness. Kathy Madden, MSN, FNP-BC, AOCNP, APHN, will be recognized with the Compassionate Care Award for her unwavering dedication and exceptional care for patients. And finally, Dr. Allie Dashow, Jimmy Hexter and Amy Lipin will be honored with the Courage Award for their remarkable strength and resilience in their melanoma journeys.

As we prepare for this special evening, we're also honored to highlight the stories of our incredible donors, whose commitment makes events like this possible. Longtime supporter, Tom Chiusano, shared:

> **"I've kind of lost track of when but a dozen or so years ago my surgeon Dr. Daniel Coit called me to say that he and my oncologist Dr. Paul Chapman wanted me to do something. Before Dan could tell me what it was I said 'YES,' there was nothing these two men could ask of me that I wouldn't do. They saved my life in 1998. They had nominated me for a Courage Award from the MRF which I gladly accepted. That was the beginning of my relationship with this great charity. I have been a donor and involved ever since that phone call. I am happy to say that both doctors have been recognized by the MRF for their achievements which go way beyond what they did for me. I hope to continue to contribute to the MRF for as long as I can. Changing and saving lives is what this charity is all about."**

Stories like this remind us why the New York Gala is more than just an event—it's a celebration of resilience, impact and the power of community to change lives.

Don't forget – Superyacht Captain, TV Personality, Melanoma Patient and Advocate, Jason Chambers, will headline as our event emcee for the evening! Limited tickets are still available, don't miss out on purchasing your ticket today! For further information about the New York Gala, to purchase tickets, learn about sponsorship opportunities or to make a tax-deductible donation, click the button below.

Purchase a Ticket or Sponsorship

14th Annual Denver Gala Recap



(Photo from left to right: T. Clarke Octigan, Jacquie Palisi and Jennifer Melahn)

Denver, we cannot thank you enough for supporting the 14th Annual Gala! We had an amazing evening with everyone. Thanks to your generous support, we surpassed our goal and have currently raised over **$310,000** and still counting! Over the past 14 years, this amazing community has raised an astounding **$3,654,193** to fund melanoma research, provide vital educational resources for patients and families and strengthen advocacy at both the state and federal level. Thank you for showing us that Progress is Power. There's still time to make a meaningful, tax-deductible gift to support our mission. Click here to make your gift today.

View Event Photos!

Education Corner

Now Available: On-Demand Recording of the 'Ask the Expert' Webinar on Pediatric Melanoma



Maria Gnarra Buethe, MD, PhD, FAAD
Division Chief of Dermatology at Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC) and Director of Pediatric Dermatology at the University of California, Irvine

MRF
Melanoma Research Foundation



Andrea Smith
Pediatric Melanoma Patient's Caregiver/Parent and Educator

ASK THE EXPERT

Pediatric Melanoma: Early Detection, Unique Presentations and Prevention

September 25, 2025 **7:00 PM ET**

In last week's webinar, Dr. Maria Buethe shared important findings on how melanoma can present in children and teens, which warning signs should prompt further evaluation and key prevention strategies for families. We also heard from Andrea Smith, a pediatric melanoma caregiver and educator, who offered an invaluable perspective on the patient and

family experience.

Watch Here

Register Now for the Upcoming Ask the Expert: Mucosal Melanoma – Current and Emerging Treatments, Research and Patient Perspectives



Join us on October 16, for an educational webinar on mucosal melanoma, one of the rarest and most challenging forms of melanoma. This session will explore current treatment options and highlight emerging research aimed at improving patient outcomes.

We will be joined by Kasey Couts, PhD, Assistant Professor and Co-Director of the CU Center for Rare Melanomas, who will share expert insights from clinical trials. We will also hear an important patient perspective from Toni English, a stage IV mucosal melanoma survivor and patient advocate.

Register Today



Join us on October 30, for an insightful webinar exploring the emerging role of minimal residual disease (MRD) testing in melanoma management. This session will provide an overview of MRD testing and its types, share recent data and highlight how experts are integrating MRD testing into melanoma treatment and care.

We will be joined by Dr. Beitsch, a surgical oncologist trained at MD Anderson Cancer Center and the John Wayne Cancer Institute. Don't miss this opportunity to learn how MRD testing is shaping the future of melanoma management and improving patient outcomes.

Register Today

Save the Date: Together Against Melanoma – Saint John's Cancer Institute Patient and Caregiver Symposium



Join the MRF and Saint John's Cancer Institute for the next installment of our Together Against Melanoma: Patient and Caregiver Symposium on November 22. This in-person and virtual event will feature expert discussions on the latest in diagnosis, treatment and supportive care.

Registration details will be available soon—stay tuned!

Learn More

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month



In recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month, the MRF reaffirms its commitment to ensuring that melanoma education and resources are accessible to everyone. We are proud to offer Spanish-language materials to better support patients and caregivers in Hispanic communities, including:

- Diagnóstico Del Melanoma de Piel — [Diagnosing Melanoma of the Skin]
- Metástasis Leptomeníngea (ML) — [Leptomeningeal Disease (LMD) Fact Sheet]
- El Protector Solar y su Rutina Diaria — [Sunscreen Daily Routine Guide]
- Equipo de Protección Personal — [Personal Protective Equipment Kit Against Melanoma]

These resources are free to download or order and share within your community to help raise awareness and support those impacted by melanoma. You can place your order using the order form here.



Miles for Melanoma: Summer Success, Fall Momentum

We're heading into the final stretch of our 2025 Miles for Melanoma 5K season, and there's still time to join us on the course! This fall and winter, we'll be hitting the road in Seattle (Oct 4), Los Angeles (Oct 5), San Diego (Oct 18), Atlanta (Nov 2), San Francisco (Nov 16), Tampa Bay (December 6) and Fort Myers (December 13). And the momentum doesn't stop there—our February events will open later this fall, including the exciting launch of a brand-new city to the Miles for Melanoma program!

Don't miss your chance to be part of this powerful movement. Register today and take steps toward a future without melanoma.

Register Now

Get Ready for the 5th Annual #GetNakedJax Event!



Only 2 weeks to go until the 5th Annual #GetNakedJax! Join us on Thursday, October 16 in Jacksonville for an unforgettable evening of cocktails, dinner, live entertainment and community spirit—all in support of melanoma research. Since its founding, #GetNakedJax has brought the community together with a shared mission to eradicate melanoma through funding critical research. In 2024 alone, the event raised over $230,000 to support the MRF's Women in Science Melanoma Research Grant, and since 2021, it has contributed more than $630,000 to life-changing research.

This year's program will be especially meaningful: Bill Daly, Stage IV-C metastatic melanoma patient, will share his powerful personal story, reminding us all of the urgent need to fund research and support the melanoma community. And be sure to watch this video from event founder Jason Sessions, who shares his own melanoma journey, the inspiration behind #GetNakedJax and what attendees can look forward to this year.

Beyond the celebration, every ticket and donation directly fuels melanoma research, raises awareness for prevention and helps advance progress for those affected by this disease. Don't miss this impactful and fun-filled evening—be part of the movement to make a difference!

Purchase a Ticket or Sponsorship!

Upcoming Events

October 4: Seattle Miles for Melanoma

October 5: Los Angeles Miles for Melanoma

October 16: 5th Annual #GetNakedJax

October 16: Ask the Expert: Mucosal Melanoma

October 18: San Diego Miles for Melanoma

October 25: CURE OM Global Science Meeting

October 30: 24th Annual New York Gala

November 2: Atlanta Miles for Melanoma

November 9: Brain Metastases Summit 4.0

November 13: DC Wings of Hope Reception

November 16: San Francisco Miles for Melanoma

November 22: Saint John's Cancer Institute Patient & Caregiver Symposium

December 6: Tampa Bay Miles for Melanoma

December 13: Fort Myers Miles for Melanoma

In the News

Coolibar and Dayanara Torres Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month While Raising Skin Cancer Awareness - *Newswire*

Surgery Faculty Member Martin McCarter, MD, Receives Melanoma Research Foundation's 2025 Humanitarian Award - *University of Colorado Anschutz*

Self-Checks Save Lives - Melanoma Research Foundation - *9 News*

Study Finds Melanoma Less Common in Individuals with Several Tattoos - *University of Utah Huntsman Cancer Institute*

Mucosal Melanoma Survivor: 4 Reasons I Joined a Clinical Trial at MD Anderson - *MD Anderson Cancer Center*

FDA Approval Path Remains Unclear for RP1 in Melanoma - *Targeted Oncology*

MRF Melanoma Research Foundation

melanoma.org

1420 K Street NW, 7th Floor Washington, DC 20005 | Tel: (202) 347-9675
Melanoma Research Foundation © 2026 All rights reserved.

Unsubscribe | Donate | Visit our website

POWERED BY blackbaud

Powered by Blackbaud
nonprofit software

If you need assistance when submitting a donation, please call (800) 673-1290, Option 2

© Copyright 2018 Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) | Terms of Use | Privacy Policy