Gene Associated With Metastatic Melanoma Identified

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Craig J. Ceol, PhD (Damon Runyon Fellow ’05-’07) of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, and colleagues, have identified a new protein that is involved in metastatic melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer. The protein, GDF6, is part of a class of proteins called “growth differentiation factors” that helps cells divide and differentiate into specific cell types. Looking at human melanoma cells, the researchers found that 80 percent of patient tumors had elevated levels of GDF6 and these higher levels correlated to the aggressiveness of the cancer. Patients with less GDF6 had a lower risk of metastasis and a better chance of survival. The next step for the scientists is to find a way to turn off GDF6 that could potentially be used for treating patients. The study was published in the Journal of Clinical Investigation. Read more about the study here.

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