

# Melanoma Awareness Month 2024: In Case You Missed It

Inspired by the power of community and wanting to give those impacted by melanoma as many opportunities to connect as possible.

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Throughout the last 31 days, the entire melanoma community has come together to recognize Melanoma Awareness Month. The community heard from leading experts in the field, connected with other patient advocates, and spread awareness of melanoma and the importance of prevention, early detection, and the impact of research.

Inspired by the power of community and wanting to give those impacted by melanoma as many opportunities to connect as possible, the Melanoma Research Alliance planned several opportunities to engage throughout the month. In case you missed any of it, we have recapped MRA's Melanoma Awareness Month programming.

## MRA's Melanoma Awareness Month Programming

Townhall with MRA's Dr. Marc Hurlbert & Stephanie Kauffman: Melanoma Awareness Month Kickoff

MRA's CEO Dr. Marc Hurlbert and COO & President Stephanie Kauffman hosted a live virtual town hall to officially kick off Melanoma Awareness Month, where they connected with the community to share the latest about MRA, our recent research investment, emerging research in the melanoma community, and more.

Ask the Expert: Understanding Risk & Improving Outcomes in Melanoma

During the first week of Melanoma Awareness Month, MRA hosted an Ask the Expert on the Melanoma > Exchange with board-certified dermatologist and Assistant Professor in Dermatology at Harvard Medical School Dr. Eugene Semenov, where he answered members' questions on understanding risk and improving outcomes in melanoma.

Dr. Semenov's clinical expertise includes cutaneous oncology with a focus on melanoma and supportive oncodermatology. His research interests include epidemiology of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer with an emphasis on improving outcomes and treatment selection for patients with advanced disease.

## TIL Therapy: A Conversation with Dr. Allison Betof Warner

You may have heard of AMTAGVI, also known by the generic name lifileucel, a new therapy that recently earned FDA approval to treat patients with advanced melanoma in the second-line setting. AMTAGVI is the first individualized Tumor Infiltrating Lymphocyte (TIL) T cell immunotherapy to earn FDA approval for any cancer.

To learn more about the approval, MRA's Chief Science Officer Dr. Joan Levy sat down with medical oncologist Dr. Allison Betof Warner of Stanford University. Dr. Betof Warner has been a pioneer in the use of commercial tumor infiltrating lymphocyte (TIL) therapy.

## MRA Announced \$12.6 Million in Grants to Advance Melanoma Prevention, Detection & Treatment

MRA announced its new \$12.6 million commitment to fund melanoma research, supporting more than 30 scientists at leading academic and medical institutions across the US and globally.

This year's newly funded awards focus on topics including:

- Advancing Immunotherapy and Treatment Options for Treatment Resistant Melanomas
- Answering Questions in Rare Melanomas
- Tackling Brain Metastases
- Harnessing the Power of AI and Machine Learning
- Understanding the Role of the Microbiome

## Melanoma Instagram Story Takeovers

Throughout the month, melanoma patient advocates J.D., Katie, and Brittanny took over MRA's Instagram Stories to share their melanoma journeys and talk about all things melanoma prevention, detection, survivorship, and advocacy. Visit [MRA's Instagram page](#) to watch their takeovers and follow their profiles to stay updated on their journeys!

## MRA Spotlight: Mollie's Fund & their National Nursing Initiative

[Mollie's Fund](#) is a team of crusaders on a mission to increase awareness of melanoma, provide information and services for skin cancer prevention, and support patients.

Their latest efforts include an initiative that empowers nurses across eleven hospitals on Long Island to screen all patients who enter their care for skin cancer, and to discuss prevention and detection with them. Victoria Siegel, professor of nursing at Molloy University and medical advisor to Mollie's Fund, helped develop the screening protocols, with an overall goal to expand this program far and wide.

On May 21st, in honor of Melanoma Awareness Month, MRA's CEO Dr. Marc Hurlbert sat down with Maggie and Jack Biggane, founders of Mollie's Fund, and Victoria Siegel to discuss this initiative and how other hospital systems can get involved.

### MRA's May Match Campaign

Thanks to a generous donor, all gifts made to MRA during Melanoma Awareness Month were doubled. With the support of our incredible community of advocates and donors, we surpassed our goal of \$300,000. As always, 100% of every dollar raised will go towards melanoma research - helping us fund two new Young Investigator grant awards for the next three years. You can contribute to the campaign by [making a donation](#) on the final day of Melanoma Awareness Month!

### Step Up for Melanoma

The melanoma community has always stepped up for MRA, and we are so grateful! This year, as part of our fourth annual Step Up for Melanoma Challenge, the community showed up in a big way! Together, the Step Up community walked over 3.7 million steps and raised over \$50,000 for MRA's lifesaving melanoma research program! We were inspired every day by the spirit of the Step Up community: from seeing participants get their daily steps in, sharing why melanoma research means so much to them, and forging new connections along the way.

### 2024 Milken Global Conference: The Next Wave of Immunotherapy and Cancer Treatments

Harnessing the body's own immune system has revolutionized the treatment of several cancers, including melanoma. In 2018, Drs. James Allison and Tasuku Honjo shared the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for discoveries that led to the development of cancer therapy by inhibition of negative immune regulation.

To date, immunotherapies have been shown effective in many cases of melanoma and about two dozen other cancer types. The armamentarium of immune therapies has also grown to include novel therapeutic mechanisms that may have antiviral applications.

MRA's CEO Dr. Marc Hurlbert moderated a panel of experts at Milken Institute's Milken Global Conference discussing the current treatment horizon, the next act in immunotherapy, mRNA vaccines and cell-based approaches such as TIL cell and CAR-T therapy, and what these developments mean for patients, investors, the life-sciences industry, and the outlook for cancer treatments.

### Melanoma Story Swap

MRA hosted a Melanoma Story Swap, a virtual interactive session where anyone touched by melanoma was invited to join, share their story, ask questions, and bask in the power and connection of the melanoma community. The event was hosted by MRA's Chief Science Officer Dr. Joan Levy and Digital Engagement and Communications Manager Renee Orcione. We look forward to doing it again in 2025!

## Don't Fry Day

Each year, the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention designates the Friday before Memorial Day as "Don't Fry Day" to raise awareness of skin cancer prevention and to encourage everyone to protect their skin as they head outdoors to kick off the summer season.

This blog was published by the [Melanoma Research Alliance](#) on May 30, 2024. It is republished with permission.

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