

Melanoma Biorepository to Advance Research and Patient Care

The Melanoma Research Alliance's Melanoma Biorepository aims to speed up scientific progress and improve melanoma health outcomes globally.

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Rare melanoma subtypes, such as [acral](#) and [mucosal](#) melanoma, only account for roughly 5% of all melanoma cases. Because of their low incidence compared to the more common cutaneous (skin) melanoma, these rare melanoma subtypes have seen slower scientific progress. To help bridge this gap, the Melanoma Research Alliance (MRA) announced this month the launch of the [Melanoma Biorepository](#) - a resource poised to accelerate melanoma research and improve patient care.

The MRA Melanoma Biorepository will:

- Enable researchers to study melanoma biology with greater efficiency and depth,
- Identify novel therapeutic targets,
- Advance biomarker development.

In partnership with the University of Colorado – the host site of the biorepository where samples will be stored – the MRA Melanoma Biorepository aims to speed up scientific progress and improve health outcomes for patients with melanoma globally, especially for those with the rare melanoma subtypes who face longer diagnosis times and have poorer prognoses.

What is the MRA Melanoma Biorepository and how does it work?

Studying diseases often requires access to human biological samples at scale. The collection and storage of these biological samples for future research occurs through a biorepository, or “biobank”. These samples may include blood, tissue (normal or cancerous), or bodily fluids. The MRA Melanoma Biorepository serves as a centralized resource that provides qualified researchers with access to patient samples and relevant clinical data that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

When analyzing these samples, researchers look for a variety of disease-related features such as

genetic mutations, tumor biomarkers, changes in the expression of genes and proteins, and cellular/molecular characteristics associated with disease progression. These insights are critical for understanding how melanoma develops, progresses, and can be monitored or treated.

“Major breakthroughs in cancer research start with access to quality biospecimens. The Melanoma Biorepository represents an opportunity where patients can directly contribute to research that will drive discovery and improved patient outcomes,” said MRA’s Chief Science Officer Dr. Joan Levy.

The MRA Melanoma Biorepository is intentionally structured to be accessible and inclusive of [all melanoma subtypes](#) - with a focus on acral and mucosal melanomas. To donate samples, patients must be located in the United States, be 18 years or older, can be of any sex, race, or ethnicity, and have a confirmed melanoma diagnosis. Donated samples, including tumor tissue, blood, saliva, or other fluids, may be from past or upcoming biopsies or surgeries. MRA ensures that all patients are fully informed about the benefits and potential risks of participating.

Upon signing an informed consent form, MRA arranges for shipment of tissue samples from the hospital to the MRA Melanoma Biorepository (located at the University of Colorado), where samples may then be immediately used for research, stored for future research studies, or processed into DNA, RNA, or protein for molecular analyses.

As with the [MRA’s RARE Registry](#), a direct-to-patient registry for those with rare melanoma subtypes like acral and mucosal melanoma, all patient information in the MRA Melanoma Biorepository is de-identified. Any identifiable medical information is stored in a separate database from the non-identifiable data shared with researchers. Those enrolled in the RARE Registry including patients with acral, mucosal, and cutaneous melanomas can also choose to donate to the MRA Melanoma Biorepository.

“Every donation to the MRA Melanoma Biorepository represents a step towards advancing research and improving health outcomes for patients with rare melanomas. Patient involvement will help move the entire field forward,” said Dr. Jessica Scales, MRA’s Associate Director of Rare Melanoma Research.

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