

Melanoma Research Included in 2009 Defense Appropriations

Melanoma Research Foundation applauds Department of Defense for addressing troops' increased risk for melanoma and other skin cancers

September 25, 2008 (FPRC) -- HILLSBOROUGH, N.J.—The Department of Defense is seeking \$4 million dedicated to research efforts on melanoma and other skin cancers, a danger facing many military personnel. As part of the Fiscal 2009 Department of Defense Appropriations Conference Report, the House of Representatives is currently considering the measure.

'With more than 140,000 personnel currently stationed in Iraq, the intensity of sun exposure puts our men and women at long-term risk for melanoma—the most serious form of skin cancer and one of the fastest growing cancers in the U.S.,' said Randy Lomax, chairman of the Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF). 'By specifically including melanoma in its peer-reviewed cancer research program—as it does with breast, prostate and ovarian cancers—the Department of Defense recognizes the scope of this very serious problem facing our troops.'

Melanoma can strike people of all ages, all races and both sexes, but is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25- to 29-years-old and the second most common cancer in adolescents and young adults 15- to 29-years-old. In 2008, more than 62,000 Americans are expected to be diagnosed with the disease, resulting in an estimated 8,400 deaths.

In its early stages, melanoma can be successfully removed and monitored by regular skin screenings. However, the disease is deadly in its most advanced stages, as few treatment options exist. The median life expectancy for patients with advanced melanoma is less than one year and existing therapies have not improved survival in more than a decade.

Approximately six years ago, the cancer research community began unlocking the underlying genetic malfunctions that occur in cells causing melanoma. Although the melanoma research community is poised to make unprecedented strides in the understanding, prevention and treatment of melanoma, more research is needed to understand the unique biology of the many different types of melanoma and to develop effective treatments. These research efforts have been hindered by the fact that melanoma research is woefully underfunded.

The Melanoma Research Foundation acts as an advocate for the melanoma community to raise the awareness of this disease and the need for a cure. The MRF has been working to raise and keep melanoma awareness a high priority with elected officials and to encourage their support of research funding.

'Increased funding, especially at the federal levels, for research is critical to finding a cure given the very real opportunities available for developing new and meaningful therapies, especially for those with advanced melanoma,' said Dr. David E. Fisher, chief of Dermatology at Massachusetts General Hospital and a member of the MRF's Scientific Advisory Committee. 'Becoming part of the Defense Department's Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs [CDMRP] is a major victory for the thousands of people living with melanoma and our veterans who may develop it.'

The Department of Defense's CDMRP represents a unique partnership among the public, Congress

and the military. The CDMRP was established within the U.S. Army Medical Research and Material Command in 1993, when Congress, in response to grassroots advocacy efforts, tasked the Department of Defense with developing and managing an innovative breast cancer program. Since 1993, CDMRP has grown to include programs aimed at other major diseases, including prostate cancer, ovarian cancer and now melanoma.

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About Melanoma

Melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer, is one of the fastest growing cancers in the U.S., and can strike people of all ages, all races and both sexes. In fact, with a one in 50 lifetime risk of developing melanoma, this year more than 62,000 Americans are expected to be diagnosed with the disease, resulting in an estimated 8,400 deaths. Melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25- to 29-years-old and the second most common cancer in adolescents and young adults 15- to 29-years-old.

About Melanoma Research Foundation

The Melanoma Research Foundation (MRF) is the largest independent, national organization devoted to melanoma in the United States. The Foundation is committed to the support of medical research in finding effective treatments and eventually a cure for melanoma. The Foundation also educates patients and physicians about prevention, diagnosis and treatment of melanoma, while acting as an advocate for the melanoma community to raise awareness of this disease and the need for a cure. The MRF Web site is the premiere source for melanoma information seekers. More information is available at www.melanoma.org.

Contact Information

For more information contact Deborah J. Danuser of Melanoma Research Foundation
(<http://www.melanoma.org>)
(202) 742-5256

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