



Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2007

JOHNS HOPKINS ANNUAL SCHOLAR AWARDS INCREASED **Melanoma Foundation Funds Two Kimmel Cancer Center Researchers**

Baltimore, MD – February 7, 2007 – The Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation (JMNMF) and the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center announce presentations of two Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation Research Scholar Awards. The inaugural award of one scholarship by the Foundation in 2006 increased to two in 2007, to support and acknowledge remarkable graduate students working to advance melanoma research. Ms. Megan Keefe in the Cellular and Molecular Medicine Program and Ms. Courtney Silverthorn in the Pharmacology Program, at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, are highly recommended for their notable research progress and accomplishments. Melanoma is the most serious and lethal form of skin cancer responsible for 79% of all skin cancer deaths, but only receives about 10% of all funding provided to skin cancer research.

According to Dr. Rhoda Alani, Director for the Laboratory of Cutaneous Oncology for the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center, “Our partnership with the Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation continues to grow and this twofold increase in 2007 scholar funding underscores the synergy and commitment of our organizations. These scholar awards are the first of their kind, dedicated to graduate student researchers, and provide the Kimmel Cancer Center with greater research resources and cultivates relevant academic capacity in developing professionals in the field.”

Dr. Alani, who is an Associate Professor of Oncology, Dermatology, Molecular Biology and Genetics and Director of the Laboratory of Cutaneous Oncology in the Kimmel Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, is currently working on assessing Id1 as a marker for early melanomas in conjunction with the efforts of collaborators at other institutions. Under Alani’s oversight, members of the renowned “Alani Lab” are interested in defining the molecular pathways that lead to melanoma development and progression with the expectation that defining such pathways will lead to novel diagnostic, prognostic and/or therapeutic approaches to melanoma.

Robert E. Nicolay, JMNMF chair stated, “The JMNMF is extremely pleased to expand our support for the research efforts of the Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center, a world-renowned organization at the forefront of this promising field. Funding melanoma research is an integral component of the JMNMF mission, and the synergy created through this growing partnership will contribute to the progress of melanoma biology research - truly we continue to make successful steps forward for both organizations.”

The Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation

...the voice for melanoma prevention, detection, care and cure



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Ms. Keefe's research focus on melanoma metastasis and cell-to-cell communication, has resulted in the identification of a novel therapeutic target for melanoma and such treatments are currently under development in collaboration with industry. Her project was selected as a finalist for a National Institutes of Health "Director's Pioneer Award" in 2006 and was deemed one of the top 25 most pioneering scientific studies worldwide.

Ms. Silverthorn's research is concentrated on the evaluation of the role of "hypoxia" and how the microenvironment affects a tumor's biological response. The combined results of her experiments and efforts are expected to better define the role of hypoxia in melanoma development, progression and response to targeted therapies. Working in this highly competitive area of investigation, she recently attended the International Melanoma Research Congress in The Netherlands and presented her research data. The work was extremely well-received and the abstract was published in *Melanoma Research*.

Since its inception in 1973, the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins has been dedicated to better understanding human cancers and finding more effective treatment. One of only 39 cancer centers in the country specifically designated by the [National Cancer Institute \(NCI\)](#) as a Comprehensive Cancer Center, the Kimmel Cancer Center has active programs in clinical research, laboratory research, education, community outreach, and prevention and control. The Johns Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center is the only such NCI Comprehensive Cancer Center in the state of Maryland.

Formed in 2004, the Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, public charity. The mission of the Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation is to support medical research that will ultimately lead to a cure for melanoma; seek opportunities to educate the general public on prevention and the seriousness of melanoma; and be a resource for patients and the entire melanoma community.