

Melanoma skin cancer



Cancer refers to a group of diseases characterised by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. Despite excellent progress in understanding, diagnosing and treating cancer, its burden is increasing globally. Cancer accounts for a quarter of all deaths and is the number one cause of death for people aged 45–64 in an increasing number of Member States, overtaking cardiovascular disease¹.

Melanoma (skin, eye) cancer incidence in the EU–28 reaches 90,000 new cases annually and melanoma of the skin is considered one of the fastest rising forms of cancer, albeit with hotspots in Europe being the Scandinavian countries, Switzerland and Austria. Due to ageing of the population, the number of melanoma patients will remain high over the next decades. Exposure to ultraviolet light is a known risk factor for this disease.

However, following years of collaborative research advanced stage (IV) skin melanoma is no longer a death sentence as better early diagnosis and tailored treatments have become available, in particular through advances in immuno-oncology. Thus, people with advanced skin melanoma are living considerably longer thanks to targeted therapies that are tailored to tumour characteristics of each patient.

Collaborative research on cancer among scientific, medical, patient, technological and pharmaceutical communities has been and remains a high priority in the EU framework programmes. **Under the Seventh Framework Programme (2007-2013) and Horizon 2020, the current EU framework programme for research and innovation, cancer research was funded to the tune of € 2.7 billion.**

In order to achieve practical benefits and improve the quality-of-life of cancer patients, EU-supported research focuses on fighting cancer, translating this basic knowledge into clinical research targeted at better diagnostics and interventions. Other important issues are also covered, e.g. screening, ageing and cancer, childhood cancers, regional differences, psychosocial aspects, palliative and end-of-life care, survivorship issues and guidance to support groups².

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Causes_of_death_statistics#Further_Eurostat_information

² http://cordis.europa.eu/home_en.html

FP7 and promising Horizon 2020 projects

UM CURE 2020 will test new combinations of drugs to treat uveal melanoma metastases; melanoma is a rare tumour that occurs inside the eye apparently as a result of exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light (EU grant: EUR 6.2 million).

MELGEN is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action aimed at understanding and identifying the genetic and immunological determinants of melanoma survival (EU grant: EUR 4 million).

MEL-PLEX strives to predict prognosis and responsiveness to treatments in order to personalise and optimise melanoma therapy (EU grant: EUR 3.6 million).

ZF-MEL-CHEMBIO is an ERC-funded project looking into melanocytes and using zebrafish to identify potential drug targets to treat Melanoma. (EU grant: EUR 1.9 million)

MMUVR is an ERC-funded project is studying melanoma in mice to work out how genetic susceptibility affects melanoma development and progression following UV exposure. (EU grant: EUR 2.2 million)

DermTest is an SME-led feasibility study with the ultimate aim of developing a toolkit for doctors to allow them enable to take charge of patient management in melanoma prevention, detection and treatment; more than 150 clinicians are using the system, and over 5.500 cases were diagnosed (EU grant: EUR 50.000).

The European Code Against Cancer and prevention of melanoma

Coordinated by the European Commission (Directorate General for Health and Food Safety), the [European Code Against Cancer](#)³ is a key prevention tool that recommends citizens to reduce exposure to sun light, in particular children, and sunbeds.

The Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks

Also coordinated by the Directorate General for Health and Food Safety, the [Scientific Committee on Health, Environmental and Emerging Risks](#), on request of Commission services, provides opinions on questions concerning health, environmental and emerging risks. One of the Committee's well-known opinions was the one on *the Biological effects of the UV-C radiation relevant to health with particular reference to UV-C lamps*. More [here](#).

³ https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/major_chronic_diseases/docs/2014_ecac_en.pdf