

Researchers outline need for evaluation of gene expression profiling in melanoma

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Grossman and members of the clinical team. Credit: Huntsman Cancer Institute

A consensus statement published today in *JAMA Dermatology* by an international group of melanoma researchers evaluates the use of prognostic genetic expression profile (GEP) testing to guide clinical management of patients with melanoma. The group cautioned against routine use of currently available GEP tests for patients with cutaneous melanoma.

Prognostic gene expression profiling is a technique that measures the expression of a particular group of genes that may help predict patient outcomes. For [melanoma](#), GEP tests are designed to predict whether a patient's tumor is likely to be aggressive and metastasize. Although routine GEP testing is not endorsed by national melanoma care guidelines, its use is increasing among clinicians who care for patients with melanoma to guide decisions on treatment and surveillance imaging. GEP testing may have limitations, however, particularly in early-stage tumors where a "low risk" result could give patients a false sense of security or a "high risk" result could subject them to more aggressive treatments or monitoring that may be unnecessary. Further, there are no [national standards](#) for which type of [test](#) should be used, when it should be used, or how accurate these tests need to be.

An international group of melanoma experts, the Melanoma Prevention Working Group, sought to advance conversations around how and when gene expression profiling should be used by clinicians caring for patients with melanoma. Through a series of meetings, surveys, and literature reviews, they authored this statement to review the current data and make recommendations on use of GEP testing in melanoma. Their goal is to assist clinicians in determining when and how gene expression profiling should be adopted in [clinical practice](#) and to outline the criteria by which tests should be evaluated and incorporated into clinical care guidelines.

The group included approximately 200 dermatologists, medical oncologists, surgical oncologists, and laboratory researchers who specialize in melanoma. "We are optimistic about the future use of gene expression profiling in melanoma patients and are hopeful that this [consensus statement](#) can be a resource to clinicians in understanding the limitations of GEP testing and guiding the evaluation and use of new tests as they become available," said Doug Grossman, MD, Ph.D., Melanoma Center leader at Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI) and

professor of dermatology at the University of Utah. Grossman convened the working group and is lead author of this consensus statement.

The researchers hope the statement will provide a road map to help understand how GEP testing should be used when caring for patients with melanoma and what further evaluation is needed for its adoption in this field.

More information: Douglas Grossman et al, Prognostic Gene Expression Profiling in Cutaneous Melanoma, *JAMA Dermatology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1001/jamadermatol.2020.1729](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamadermatol.2020.1729)

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