

Title: A Tradition of Innovation Runs in Milwaukee's Blood: Celebrating 75 Years of Partnership

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Blood—the ubiquitous life source that sustains all, from man to mosquito, blood is important. It's a biological imperative. From the pages of Leviticus declaring “the life of the flesh is in the blood” and extending forwards and back across time, blood is vital. Beyond its lifegiving properties that circulate swiftly through our own veins, blood plays a crucial role advancing medical discoveries, diagnoses, and treatment. At the vanguard of this medical research, Milwaukee's own Versiti, a critical resource and partner to the healthcare community with homegrown roots and a national reach.

From its beginnings as a community blood banking initiative run by The Junior League in 1947, Versiti has grown in its scope, scale, and function in profound ways. Uniting several of midwestern affiliates specializing in blood and tissue research and expertise, in 2019 Milwaukee's own BloodCenter of Wisconsin formally rebranded to Versiti. Along with a new logo and unified ethos, Versiti continues its long-standing tradition of providing lifesaving and life-enhancing discovery, diagnosis, and treatment. Comprising now of four essential components: the Versiti Diagnostic Laboratory, the Versiti Blood Research Institute (VBRI), organ and tissue procurement and blood banking initiatives, Versiti boasts a portfolio of impressive and essential services and affiliations.

Since expanding its scope and deepening its partnership with MCW's researchers and practitioners, Versiti now provides communities with a broad range of vital services. The Versiti Blood Research Institute (VBRI), housed on MCW's campus, is a state-of-the-art facility that provides research investigators access to pioneering research equipment and services. A close collaborator of MCW, the investigators and clinical scientists at the VBRI embrace a culture of curiosity-driven collaboration to continually facilitate opportunities for translational research.

For physician-scientist, Dr. Michael Deininger, the affiliation between MCW and Versiti, and more specifically, the VBRI, provides him and his colleagues unique and timely benefits. As Professor in the Department of Medicine and Associate Dean of Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin, his active clinical practice provides him unique opportunities to learn about the “unsolved problems and unmet needs” of his patients. His work as Director and Senior Investigator of Versiti's Blood Research Institute means that he has access to cutting-edge lab resources to make discoveries that lead to answers.

Similarly, the cutting-edge Versiti Diagnostic Lab is one of only a handful of laboratories nationwide capable of performing highly specialized functional and genetic diagnostic tests. The expertise and innovation in the areas of Hematology and Oncology at the Versiti Diagnostic Lab has a long reach. Accepting nationwide samples for use in both diagnostic testing and clinical research, the Versiti Diagnostic Lab offers a robust range of laboratories and services, including Donor Testing Laboratory, Hematology Genetic Testing Lab, and a Histocompatibility Lab for solid organ and stem cell transplant patients.

Each innovation driven by Versiti creates improvements to diagnoses, advancements in treatments, and creates opportunities for better patient outcomes. In this way, among others, Versiti's ethos

echoes the Medical College of Wisconsin's guiding principles to pioneer pathways to a healthier world. Over the last 75 years, the work that began as a humble community run blood center in 1940's Milwaukee has grown to encompass a foundation dedicated to providing a host of vital blood services, ranging from blood and blood product collection within the communities, to providing esoteric testing not otherwise performed in clinical labs. There's a lot to celebrate about the long partnership between MCW and Versiti, a partnership that for decades aimed to harness the power of our collective good to bring together brilliant innovation with unmatched experience. It is this spirit of generous collaboration and the sustained dedication to transforming the health of communities near and far that makes this 75th anniversary of the partnership between MCW and Versiti so potent.