Blood Research Institute Investigators Awarded First Patent Under Versiti Name

Congratulations to Senior Investigator Richard H. Aster, MD, Senior Research Scientist Daniel Bougie, PhD, and Associate Investigator Anand Padmanabhan, MD, PhD, QIA, who were awarded the first patent under the Versiti name. Their invention provides a method for detecting platelet activation in patients diagnosed with heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT). HIT occurs when patients have an adverse reaction to the drug heparin, which is commonly used as a blood thinner. These patients experience a drop in platelet count, which can be fatal.

Blood Research Institute

Innovations in Research

Versiti Blood Research Institute Awarded Multi-Million Dollar REDS-IV Blood Study Contract

On April 1, Versiti was awarded a seven-year, $7.4 million federal contract to participate in the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute’s (NHLBI) research program to protect the nation’s blood supply and improve the collection and use of blood products. Funded by the National Institutes of Health, REDS (Recipient Epidemiology and Donor Evaluation Study) is the premier research program in blood collection, safety and recipient epidemiology in the U.S. Entering its fourth phase, REDS-IV-Pediatric will focus on the safety and efficacy of blood transfusion therapies in adults and children. The study will continue to address blood donor health and expand its donor-recipient linked database to track outcomes in pediatric and adult patients, allowing investigators to rapidly address key research questions in blood banking and transfusion medicine and inform blood policy decisions.

“As blood health innovators, Versiti is honored to continue our participation in this program to advance the safety, collection and usage of blood products,” said Alan Mast, MD, PhD, Medical Director and Senior Investigator at Versiti Blood Research Institute. “Blood transfusions are the most common procedure in healthcare, but the least understood. By tracking transfusions from vein to vein, we will learn how specific factors in blood donors can affect and improve patient outcomes.”
Senior Investigator Bonnie Dittel, PhD, Published in *Nature Communications*

Versiti Blood Research Institute Senior Investigator Bonnie Dittel, PhD, was recently published in the prominent medical journal *Nature Communications* for her discovery of a new immune cell subset that helps to dampen autoimmune attacks. Discoveries like this can lead to better treatments and care for patients battling autoimmune diseases like multiple sclerosis (MS), rheumatoid arthritis and type 1 diabetes.

“We identified a new immune cell subset, and that doesn’t happen every day,” she said. With this knowledge, she hopes to develop a universal treatment for autoimmune diseases. “We want to be able to leverage what Versiti is already committed to in cell therapies, to develop our therapeutic,” she said. “Our goal is to generate a unique cell therapy that only we have.”

Investigators have already discovered that various types of immune cells affect autoimmune diseases differently. Two immune cells of interest are T regulatory cells (Treg) and B cells. Treg negatively regulate the type of inflammation that occurs in patients with MS, which helps keep MS symptoms in check. Now, Dr. Dittel and her colleagues have discovered a new, previously unknown B cell that interacts with and promotes Treg expansion, thereby promoting their anti-inflammatory activity.

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