Innovations in Research

Investigator Hervé Falet, PhD, wins Platelets journal cover photo contest

Each year, Platelets, a leading journal on platelet biology, encourages scientists to submit photos for an annual cover contest. Versiti Blood Research Institute Investigator Hervé Falet, PhD, won the contest with an image called “Platelet Fireworks,” which first appeared on the cover of Platelets Vol. 30, and will be be featured as the cover of every issue of the journal for a year.

“It’s interesting to me that, in something so small as platelets, you can see the patterns that you see in the sky – the art of it,” Dr. Falet said.

Dr. Falet’s research focuses on platelet production and function. When you cut yourself, your platelets activate and begin to take shape, morphing from a disc to a spider-like structure. This helps your blood to clot and stop bleeding. Deficient platelet production, due to genetic causes, secondary to cancer therapy, or from unknown etiology, poses significant risks of mortality, mostly due to bleeding.

Versiti Blood Research Institute has been awarded a 5-year, $13.2 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to continue its research into von Willebrand disease (VWD), both the most common and undiagnosed bleeding disorder found in patients worldwide. Led by Senior Investigator Robert Montgomery, M.D., the project is focused on identifying changes to von Willebrand factor and bleeding symptoms in patients over time and determining additional molecular causes for the disease.

Dr. Montgomery’s research is part of a larger effort called The Zimmerman Program on the Biology of VWD. Throughout its history, Versiti investigators have made life-changing discoveries that have led to improved treatments and medical care for pediatric and adult VWD patients. Over the years, the NIH has recognized BRI with more funding than any other blood center in the country. As part of the program, Versiti will collaborate with Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin, the Medical College of Wisconsin, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Queens University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada, the University of Colorado, Washington University in St. Louis, and 10 clinical hemostasis centers across North America.
Senior Researcher Honored with International Esteemed Career Award

One of our senior researchers has been honored on the global stage for the magnitude of career contributions he has made exploring how diseases and disorders affect the stoppage of blood flow.

Dr. Hartmut Weiler, a senior researcher at Versiti Blood Research Institute, received an Esteemed Career Award at the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis’s 2019 Congress Opening Ceremony in Melbourne, Australia. He is one of only five people out of 9,000 candidates to receive the prestigious honor.

Honorees’ accomplishments are internationally regarded as exemplary models of research and mentoring excellence.

Dr. Weiler also serves as an associate professor in the department of physiology and director of transgenic research. Dr. Klaus Pressnner of Germany and Dr. Changgeng Ruan of China.

Congratulations Dr. Weiler. You are truly a Beacon of Hope.

Dr. Hartmut Weiler (right) received an Esteemed Career Award at the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis’s 2019 Congress Opening Ceremony in Melbourne, Australia.

Upcoming Events

Imagine Gala
Friday, September 13, 2019
5:30 p.m.
Tickets: $175 per person
Wisconsin Club
900 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI
Learn more: Donna Oleniczak, 414-937-6837

You Can Make a Difference

To make a gift or learn more, contact:
Versiti Blood Research Institute Foundation Office
414-937-6799 or visit https://www.versiti.org/financial-giving

Planned Giving: Leaving a Legacy

Versiti Blood Research Institute is changing lives. You know that, and you support this great work with your donations. Have you thought about your legacy, and how Versiti Blood Research Institute – which is important to you – can benefit from your estate? To learn more about planned giving and talk about where your legacy gift might be directed, please contact the Versiti Blood Research Foundation office at 414-937-6799.

Make an Immediate Impact

We’re so glad to have you as a generous financial donor. We’d be overjoyed to see you take your dedication to our life-saving mission one step further and donate blood! Donating is easy, painless and only takes about an hour of your time every eight weeks. One donation can save up to three lives, so you have the power to make a great impact on our communities! To find a donor center or blood drive near you, visit versiti.org.

Community Beacon of Hope

Gilbert C. White, II, MD

At first, Gilbert C. White, II, MD, wasn’t so sure about uprooting his life in North Carolina for Wisconsin. Though he chaired external advisory boards for what was then BloodCenter of Wisconsin in the 1990s and had attempted to recruit investigators from Versiti Blood Research Institute (BRI) to make the move to North Carolina, he wasn’t convinced its leaders were truly committed to blood research.

That changed when Jackie Fredrick took the helm as Versiti CEO in 2001. Dr. White was convinced that Fredrick’s desire to grow the research effort at Versiti, and Dr. White’s own work in the field of blood health, was a perfect fit. As a hematologist, he treated bleeding and clotting disorders, focusing on platelets and how to control them, and avoiding heart attacks and strokes in patients.

“Dr. White has a special way of giving his undivided attention to everyone with whom he interacts...”
— Debra K. Newman, PhD, Senior Investigator

In 2019, Dr. White was awarded the prestigious Tibor Greenwalt Award, which recognizes an individual who has shown outstanding leadership at Versiti. His groundbreaking work has been funded by the National Institutes of Health for 40 years, and during his tenure, the number of investigators at Versiti Blood Research Institute has nearly tripled. Dr. White has also served as a dedicated mentor to more than 60 students, fellows and investigators.

“Gil is a wonderful mentor and effective leader who takes care of junior investigators like myself by providing sufficient resources and mentorship,” said Weiguo Cui, MD, PhD, investigator at the BRI. “I am especially grateful for the help he rendered to my family at the time when I transitioned to my role at the BRI.”

Senior Investigator Debra K. Newman, PhD, agrees, saying that Dr. White goes out of his way to make each and every person at the BRI feel important. “He has a special way of giving his undivided attention to everyone with whom he interacts, whether it be his most well-established senior investigator or the most junior member to have joined the BRI,” she said. “This is a great talent to have as a leader, and one that we will all miss when Gil retires.”

Though he has grown Versiti Blood Research Institute by leaps and bounds, Dr. White attributes his success to the talented researchers he works with. “I think the great accomplishment is an accomplishment by the whole group—continuing to grow and developing synergies between individuals,” he said. “That’s a team thing.”

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