

Message from Chief Scientific Officer Michael W. Deininger, MD, PhD

As we welcome a new year, we also welcome new possibilities. This year, Versiti investigators, staff and supporters reflect on our organization's 75th anniversary and the amazing research discoveries we have made thus far. As the new chief scientific officer, I look forward to the future growth of the organization and seeing how innovation and creativity lead to new discoveries and improved outcomes for patients.



New and Exciting

Matthew Kudek, MD, receives \$200,000 grant to fight pediatric neuroblastoma

Versiti Blood Research Institute Assistant Investigator and Children's Wisconsin pediatric physician Matthew Kudek, MD, received a \$200,000 grant from the St. Baldrick's Foundation to continue his research of neuroblastoma, the most common non-brain solid tumor in children. "Our research is looking for additional ways to enhance the immune system's ability to combat [neuroblastoma]," he said.



Lisa Baumann Kreuziger, MD, MS, recognized by NIH for COVID-19 treatment contributions

In December, Versiti Medical Director of Hematology and Investigator Lisa Baumann Kreuziger, MD, MS, was recognized by National Institutes of Health (NIH) Directors Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD, and Anthony S. Fauci, MD, for her contributions to the NIH's COVID-19 Treatment Guidelines. These guidelines, which have been updated 38 times since April 2020, reflect physicians' rapidly changing understanding of COVID-19 and have become a gold standard for accuracy and treatment. Congratulations, Dr. Baumann Kreuziger!



Innovations in Research

New research will further understanding of rare blood cancer

According to the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, an estimated 99,869 people in the United States are living with or in remission from myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs), a type of leukemia in which the bone marrow makes too many red blood cells, platelets or white blood cells.

Though treatments do exist, many patients develop resistance to them, ultimately succumbing to their cancer. "My research is dedicated to understanding the inner works of leukemia, specifically myeloproliferative neoplasms," said Chief Scientific Officer Michael W. Deininger, MD, PhD.

"My lab is interested in the genetics and the signaling in leukemia cells. We hope to use the knowledge about these differences to develop strategies specific to leukemia cells that don't touch healthy cells," Dr. Deininger said. "It's about understanding precisely

"An estimated 99,869 people in the United States are living with or in remission from myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs)"

what's wrong in the blood cancer cell and using this knowledge to specifically fix the problem. We use a broad variety of technologies to map the inner works of single leukemia cells and how they interact with healthy host cells. Blood cancer is almost always systemic, and if we want to cure it, we need to appreciate that leukemia cells and healthy cells are part of the same ecosystem."

Vision for VBRI

As its new Chief Scientific Officer, Dr. Deininger hopes to further VBRI's reputation as a leader in blood health innovation. "We're innovating, recalibrating and changing the focus from what we've done in the past to where hematology is now," he said.

"My vision is to create a space of excellence that covers the entire spectrum of hematology research," he continued. "This is a place where you have exposure to the entire field of hematology within a small geographic space. I'd like to leverage that to make discoveries that would be difficult to make elsewhere."

Dr. Deininger credits VBRI's open, collaborative environment with making groundbreaking discoveries possible. "We are striving to build an open, dialectic, well-resourced and dynamic environment that stimulates people's creative potential to make a



Daxton was diagnosed with leukemia in 2016 at age 5 and spent more than half his life battling the disease, before being declared cancer-free in January 2021.

difference in the science of hematology and impact how we think about, treat and diagnose blood disorders," he said. "The mission is to promote research education and clinical care across the spectrum of hematology, with real impact on patients' lives."

In addition to leveraging VBRI investigators' established expertise in certain areas of hematology, Dr. Deininger hopes to increase depth and critical mass in other areas, including stem cell biology, hematopoiesis (the science of how blood cells are generated) and immunology. "It's important to grow the pool of faculty so that we can build out critical mass in certain areas and have a major impact," he said.

He also hopes to increase VBRI's local, national and worldwide recognition. "This is a great story; it's a story of humble beginnings—of being successful and having a big impact not just in Milwaukee and Wisconsin, but beyond that," he said. "Wisconsinites and Milwaukeeans should be very proud of that—it's the community that created this."

By showcasing VBRI as a space of excellence and increasing its notoriety, Dr. Deininger hopes to attract more world-class talent who will help further innovative research, develop new treatments and improve patient outcomes. "You cannot be successful unless you are a team," he said. "This is a collaborative place, and we mean it when we say we're committed to fairness and equity. This is in our culture."

Community Beacon of Hope: Greater Milwaukee Foundation

Spotlighting organizations and individuals in our community who go above and beyond in their support of Versiti Blood Research Institute.

Our first Community Beacon of Hope in 2022 is the Greater Milwaukee Foundation (GMF). Established in 1915 with a gift of \$1,000, the GMF has grown into a community organization that is home to hundreds of donor-directed funds, as well as an endowed fund that provides support to dozens of organizations around Milwaukee, including Versiti. The GMF provided funding



Greater Milwaukee
FOUNDATION
greater together

to Versiti in 2020 to perform COVID antibody testing and, more recently, they have provided a grant to support diverse blood collection benefitting sickle cell disease patients. For their commitment to strengthening the Milwaukee community, we name the Greater Milwaukee Foundation as our Community Beacon of Hope.



Planned Giving: Versiti Legacy Society

Accelerating the pace of groundbreaking research discoveries at Versiti Blood Research Institute depends on philanthropic gifts. These financial donations enable our investigators to explore new avenues of research that they might not be able to otherwise.

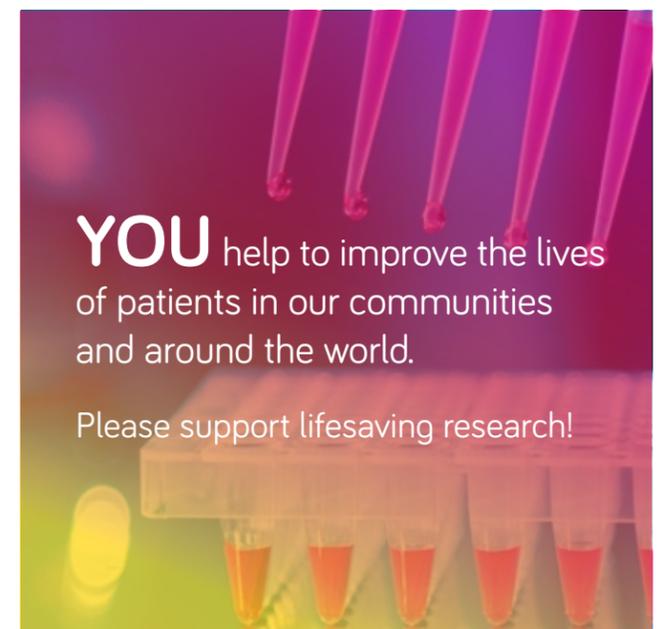
The Versiti Legacy Society honors our most dedicated financial donors who have chosen to make gifts to Versiti as part of their estate planning through gifts from wills or trusts, beneficiary designations, real estate, and more. Visit versiti.org/financial-giving to learn more about planned giving.

Planned Giving: Stock Donation

Accelerating the pace of research discoveries at Versiti Blood Research Institute depends on philanthropic gifts. These financial donations enable our investigators to explore new avenues of research that they might not be able to otherwise.

The Versiti Blood Research Institute Foundation recently partnered with Overflow to offer philanthropic gifts through stock exchange. Stock transfers are all made digitally via a secure site; tax information is determined by the mean high and low on the date of transfer.

If you have questions about stock transfer in general, please contact your financial adviser. For assistance transferring stock to Versiti, please contact the Versiti Blood Research Institute Foundation at 414-937-6799.



YOU help to improve the lives of patients in our communities and around the world.

Please support lifesaving research!