Press Release

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BloodCenter of Wisconsin Announces Three New Assays for von Willebrand Disease

Milwaukee, Wis. – November 22, 2011 – or nearly 30 years, the Hemostasis Laboratory, part of Diagnostic Laboratories at BloodCenter of Wisconsin, has built a reputation for detail and quality in its evaluations. Hemostasis Reference Laboratory at BloodCenter of Wisconsin is proud to offer the most comprehensive von Willebrand Disease testing in the United States. Now, BloodCenter is pleased to announce three new assays to add to the largest menu of assays: von Willebrand Factor (VWF) Quantitative Multimer, VWF D1472H Ristocetin-binding Polymorphism and VWF Full Gene Sequencing.

VWF Quantitative Multimer is the first offering in the market. By taking a historically subjective analysis and making it quantitative, we have increased diagnostic confidence in the result. Doctors will have quantitative information on the severity of the multimer abnormality. Quantitation also acts as a new research tool for evaluation of patients with acquired defects of VWF such as people with heart disease being treated with a ventricular assist device.

VWF D1472H Ristocetin-binding Polymorphism affects the most commonly used test to evaluate VWF function – the VWF:RCo test. The D1472H variation of the VWF gene appears to interfere with this test, resulting in an inaccurate measure of VWF function. This genetic variation is carried by 63 percent of African Americans and 17 percent of Caucasian Americans, and its significance was identified at BloodCenter's Blood Research Institute by Veronica Flood, M.D. and Robert R. Montgomery, M.D. The D1472H test allows identification of these people promoting accurate patient diagnosis.

VWF Full Gene Sequencing adds to our current strength in genetic diagnosis of von Willebrand disease. Patients with a quantitative deficiency of VWF are at increased risk for bleeding. Many of these patients have low VWF levels due to defects of their VWF gene. Full

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von Willebrand Disease

Von Willebrand Disease (VWD) is the most common inherited bleeding condition, affecting approximately one percent of the U.S. population, both males and females. However, it is often misdiagnosed, particularly among women. The disease is caused by a deficiency or dysfunction of von Willebrand factor (VWF), a plasma protein that assists platelets as they initially adhere at sites of vascular injury to begin the clotting process.

Von Willebrand factor also binds and stabilizes blood clotting factor VIII (FVIII) in circulation. Defects in VWF can cause bleeding by impairing platelet adhesion or by reducing the concentration of FVIII. Patients with VWD typically require a longer time to form clots and stop bleeding than healthy individuals.

There are four principle types of VWD:
- *Type 1* is characterized by a reduction in the amount of VWF.
- *Type 2* is characterized by a qualitative defect that yields an ineffective VWF protein.
- *Type 3* is the most severe form of the disease, with a near total deficiency of VWF.
- *Platelet-Type VWD* is caused by a mutation in a receptor on the surface of platelets that results in a bleeding phenotype similar to VWD.

VWF gene sequence analysis expands the ability of physicians to diagnose their patients and improves the ability of patients to understand their disease and make family planning decisions. Many of the patient samples received at BloodCenter are for evaluation of inherited and acquired bleeding disorders. Correctly diagnosing von Willebrand Disease is complex but essential to providing optimal treatment. BloodCenter of Wisconsin is actively involved in von Willebrand Disease research and one of the BloodCenter's goals is to refine the diagnostic process by contributing sophisticated analytic methods and developing evidence-based treatment protocols.

The experience of our Diagnostic Laboratories team, and the desire to provide industry-leading service, enables BloodCenter to go beyond simply providing a test result. The Hemostasis Reference Laboratory's Medical Director, Dr. Kenneth D. Friedman, M.D. stated, "These tests have the capacity to allow hematologists to take better care of their patients with von Willebrand Disease."

Strong History of Innovation, Expertise and Results

BloodCenter's Hemostasis Reference Laboratory has an international reputation for its diagnostic services, scientific excellence, physician consultation and innovative approaches. Since its inception in 1981, the Hemostasis Reference Laboratory continues to provide comprehensive diagnostic testing for bleeding, thrombotic, fibrinolytic and platelet function disorders.

BloodCenter is unique as they have a large team of experts who are interested in advancing both the understanding and care of patients with von Willebrand Disease. Team members include Thomas Abshire, M.D.; Veronica Flood, M.D.; Kenneth Friedman, M.D.; Joan Gill, M.D.; Sandy Haberichter, Ph.D. and Robert Montgomery, M.D. "It is very rewarding to see a basic and clinical research finding translated into new clinically relevant testing that offers patients the opportunity for improved clinical care," Dr. Montgomery indicated.

For more than 50 years, BloodCenter has helped clinicians serve patients with blood disorders. The Diagnostic Laboratories staff is dedicated to improving patient care through their leadership.

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Look for BloodCenter of Wisconsin at the 2011 ASH Annual Meeting and Exposition, held December 10-13, 2011 in San Diego at Booth #1116, for more information on the largest menu of assays and other services from Diagnostic Laboratories.

About BloodCenter of Wisconsin

As a pioneering leader in science and medicine, BloodCenter of Wisconsin contributes to the discovery, diagnosis, treatment and cures for patients like no other single organization can by virtue of the expertise, diversity and innovation that reside within each of its service areas. A private, not-for-profit organization, BloodCenter of Wisconsin provides blood, organ, tissue and marrow donations, diagnostic testing, medical services and leading-edge basic and clinical research. For more information, visit www.bcw.edu

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