



# Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre's Biospecimen Lab Year Five Progress Report

## May 2026

Advancements in cancer research are driven by collaboration between health-care providers, scientists and patients. This collective effort in disease diagnosis, treatment and monitoring propels research forward. To support this vital work, the Biospecimen Lab (BSL) was established in 2021 within the Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre (VFCC). The lab provides essential expertise and infrastructure for the collection, processing and management of high-quality biospecimens, enabling high-impact clinical and translational cancer research.

The BSL is generously supported by donor funding as part of the Baines Centre, in partnership with the London Health Sciences Foundation. The BSL is available to all oncology investigators in London conducting research involving biospecimens. It operates under the scientific and clinical oversight of Dr. Alison Allan and Dr. Stephen Welch, with Dr. Lori Lowes now serving as Biospecimen Research Coordinator, following the exceptional work of Dr. Emma Churchman, who established the lab's foundational programs.

We are pleased to share this year's updates and accomplishments:

### **Key Highlights**

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**Research Contributions:** Supported 100 research studies across 10 disease sites led by investigators in the VFCC, backed by academic and industry funding.

**Sample Processing:** Processed over 2000 biospecimens within the last year, including blood, saliva, urine, surgical drain fluid and tumour tissues.

**Staff Expansion:** In addition to recruiting Dr. Lori Lowes as our new BSL Coordinator, we also welcomed Urvi Patel, PhD candidate, to the team. Urvi supports biospecimen processing and contributes to our ongoing quality improvement and data management initiatives.

**Quality Assurance Program:** Continued to strengthen the lab's quality assurance program, aligned with the International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER) best practices.

## **Infrastructure and Capacity Building**

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**Facility Enhancements:** With generous donor funding, we replaced an aging -150 °C freezer, added a new refrigerated centrifuge and pipette set, and began implementing an enhanced sample management system to further support the growing research demand.

**Equipment Certification:** All major laboratory equipment, including freezers and centrifuges, continues to be certified and maintained to ISO 9001:2015 standards to ensure reliability and data integrity.

## **Future Plans and Goals**

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**Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) Upgrade:** Plans are underway to upgrade our LIMS platform to improve data integration, traceability and reporting across studies.

**Electronic Sample Capture System:** We are implementing an updated digital intake system for tracking all incoming biospecimens, ensuring complete and accurate data from collection through storage.

**Strategic Growth:** Continue to expand national and international research collaborations, enhance automation and digital infrastructure, and strengthen support for clinical and translational cancer research.

We deeply appreciate your continued support and collaboration, which have been instrumental in our achievements. We look forward to working together to advance cancer research and improve patient outcomes.

For more information about the Biospecimen Lab, please feel free to contact Dr. Lori Lowes at [lori.lowes@lhsc.on.ca](mailto:lori.lowes@lhsc.on.ca) or 519-685-8600 x53283.

Sincerely,

The Biospecimen Lab Team