

# In Focus:

## VTEC Aims to Bring Advanced Clinical Trial Image Training to a Broader Vascular Community

In April 2015, the founders of VasCore, the vascular ultrasound core laboratory at the Massachusetts General Hospital, opened the VasCore Training & Education Center in Boston. In this interview, Michael R. Jaff, DO, discusses the goals of VTEC and how specialized training can help advance clinical trials in the vascular space.



**Could you start by providing some background on VasCore? When was the organization founded, and what are its primary goals?**

**Dr. Jaff:** VasCore was founded by me in 1997 when it became apparent that the US Food and Drug

Administration and other regulatory groups would consider noninvasive testing as an objective marker of device patency. Not even knowing the term “core laboratory,” I blindly sent out letters to company CEOs offering this service. The rest, as they say, is history! VasCore has made its mark by concentrating on three basic tenets: (1) having the highest level of expertise in the field of vascular ultrasonography, (2) its commitment to the best customer service, and (3) the dedication to exceeding all guidelines and standards for quality processes.

**At the opening event for the VasCore Training & Education Center (VTEC), Cathy Minehan, Chairman of the Board at the Massachusetts General Hospital and Dean of the School of Management at Simmons College, spoke about unmet needs in the field, as well as**

One of the challenges of multi-center clinical trials, where duplex ultrasonography is used for patency assessment, is ensuring that the skill and quality of the technologists is at its finest.

**VTEC’s ability to address them. Which currently unmet needs are those most targeted by VTEC?**

**Dr. Jaff:** One of the challenges of multicenter clinical trials, where duplex ultrasonography is used for patency assessment, is ensuring that the skill and quality of the technologists is at its finest. However, there really has not been a facility with the equipment, personnel, or connectivity to offer the type of personalized hands-on training that is needed. That is where VTEC comes in.

**What are the relationships between VTEC and VasCore, as well as between both groups and Mass Gen?**

**Dr. Jaff:** VTEC was formed and is operated wholly

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by VasCore. VasCore is a division of the Massachusetts General Physicians Organization, and all employees are members of the Massachusetts General Hospital staff.

#### **How is VTEC funded?**

**Dr. Jaff:** Sponsors who choose to use VTEC for training or corporate/opinion leader meetings will pay a fee for the facility, personnel, equipment, etc.

#### **What kinds of health care professionals do you see as the primary potential clients of VTEC, both now and in the future?**

**Dr. Jaff:** Our focus is on training vascular technologists who will be performing duplex ultrasonography as part of clinical trials. However, we anticipate training physicians interested in ultrasound in general, including point-of-care ultrasound for emergency medicine physicians, as well as vascular ultrasound.

#### **How would you describe the physical layout and features of the facility?**

**Dr. Jaff:** VTEC is a contemporary state-of-the-art facility with two large duplex ultrasound examination rooms, a large multimedia classroom with video conferencing and recording capabilities, a business center, and a refreshment/lounge area.

#### **What roles and responsibilities are comprised in its staff?**

**Dr. Jaff:** We have very experienced vascular technologists, who, combined, possess more than 100 years of testing experience, along with a full cohort of administrative and audiovisual support staff.

#### **Are the training tracks at VTEC customized to be specific to particular trials, or are general training experiences also available?**

**Dr. Jaff:** We are initially training specifically for the needs of individual clinical trial imaging, but we have already organized general ultrasound training courses as well.

#### **Are there other uses for VTEC aside from imaging training?**

**Dr. Jaff:** Given the central location of VTEC, which is only 5 to 10 minutes from Logan Airport and is in close proximity to the Mass General Campus, MIT, and Harvard, VTEC is an ideal location for corporate meetings, strategy sessions with physicians, and global meetings through the video conferencing capabilities.

#### **Do you see a potential for expansion into other locations, both within the United States and abroad? Or, is VTEC designed as a destination learning experience?**

**Dr. Jaff:** We have no immediate plans to expand and perceive VTEC as an ideal location for training and strategic planning in the field of vascular medicine and intervention. ■

*Michael R. Jaff, DO, is Founder and Medical Director of VasCore and VTEC and Medical Director of Fireman Vascular Center, Massachusetts General Hospital, in Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Jaff may be reached at (617) 726-3784; [mjaff@partners.org](mailto:mjaff@partners.org).*