

Exact Sciences: \$2.5 million grant to support UW School of Medicine and Public Health

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MADISON, WI (March 16, 2026) — Today the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association announced a \$2.5 million grant from Exact Sciences. The money will establish the James Dahlberg Fund for Cancer Detection and Clinical Integration, an initiative designed to accelerate early cancer detection and shorten the path from scientific discovery to benefiting patients.

“We are grateful to the leadership at Exact Sciences, whose vision and commitment demonstrate the transformative power of philanthropy. Their investment will fuel discovery and accelerate the breakthroughs that benefit communities here in Wisconsin and far beyond,” said Alisa Robertson, president and CEO of the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association.

Early and accurate cancer detection is a critical driver of improved survival and reduced treatment burden. While advances in molecular diagnostics and population-based screening offer significant promise, their impact depends on strong integration across discovery research, clinical trials, and routine clinical care.

This grant is designed to enable the Wisconsin Foundation to fund projects to connect these elements, enabling research teams at the school to move promising detection strategies from the laboratory to clinical validation and into everyday care more quickly.

The fund is named in honor of [James Dahlberg](#), a professor emeritus of biomolecular chemistry and a pioneer in translating basic science discoveries into widely used cancer screening tools.

“Jim Dahlberg has always believed science should make a real difference for patients,” said Kevin Conroy, chairman and CEO of Exact Sciences. “His work helped build Wisconsin’s biotechnology industry and advanced the development of tests that allow doctors to detect cancer earlier. We are honored to make this \$2.5 million grant in Jim’s name to support the scientists and clinicians who will bring the next generation of cancer detection discoveries into patient care.”

Dahlberg’s research helped lay the foundation for molecular detection technologies that enabled at-home colorectal cancer screening and other diagnostics now used by millions of patients. His work contributed to the creation of Third Wave Technologies and the growth of Exact Sciences. In 2025, he received the American Innovator Award from the Bayh-Dole coalition, as well as the Hector F. DeLuca Scientific Achievement Award from BioForward Wisconsin, in recognition of the impact of his entrepreneurialism and visionary leadership.

Philanthropic support from the James Dahlberg Fund will advance coordinated work across the cancer care continuum. The fund will support investigator-initiated discovery and translational research in novel detection strategies; strengthen early-phase and investigator-initiated clinical trials at UW Health focused on detection, interception, and prevention; and enable population-based testing and real-world evaluation through pilot screening programs and health system-wide initiatives.

A defining element of the initiative is implementation, ensuring validated detection strategies are integrated into routine clinical workflows through clinical pathways, physician education and decision-support tools, integration into electronic health records, and evaluation of clinical and operational impact.