

# Children's Hospital

## Shared campus boosts research, teamwork

By Ann Schrader *The Denver Post*

Dr. Ron Sokol cruised last week through the corridors and clinics of Children's Hospital, peering in at the patient care that lies at the heart of a statewide collaboration he directs.

In tow was Dr. Barbara Alving, director of the National Institutes of Health division that two years ago bestowed the biggest grant — \$76 million — in the University of Colorado Denver's history.

"This will improve the health of Coloradans by accelerating the pace of research on diseases important to them," said Sokol, a professor in CU's high-ranking pediatrics department.

The five-year grant created the Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute. The initiative links the state's six professional health care schools, five hospitals, a health care network and numerous community health organizations with a 37-member national consortium.

The focus: moving discoveries from lab to bedside.

Sokol said the grant "came at a good time for the University of Colorado," which includes pediatrics department faculty at Children's.

CU was pulling up roots and mov-

ing from Colorado Boulevard and East Ninth Avenue. The University of Colorado and Children's had just opened hospitals at the former Fitzsimons Army site. Researchers were beginning to settle in state-of-the-art labs.

Work in the labs, adjacent to the two hospitals, emphasizes clinical research on babies, children, pregnant women, adults and the elderly.

"We finally have adequate, wonderful space to conduct these studies," Sokol said.

With everything on the same campus — and a new Veterans Affairs Medical Center poised to begin construction — there is a collegial atmosphere that promotes team-building.

"This is the way that medicine is moving," Sokol said. "Team science that combines clinical care and research takes medicine to new levels."

An example is a campus collaborative effort that focuses on the body's response to insulin and fats in the blood and understanding how being overweight can weaken the ability to exercise.

The goal, Sokol said, "is to decide what can be done to interfere with that process."



University of Colorado Denver School of Medicine dean Richard Krugman, right, hosts a tour of the Fitzsimons campus for Dr. Barbara Alving, the National Institutes of Health's director of the National Center for Research Resources. The tour included a stop in one of the patient rooms at Children's Hospital. Kathryn Scott Oster, *The Denver Post*

Another is in the emerging field of "fetal programming." CU's Dr. Lynn Barbour has initial results that indicate pregnant women who are obese or consume high-fat diets could be predisposing their unborn babies to hypertension, diabetes and cancer later in life.

The campus also received \$2.9 million last year in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds that supplement the big grant.

The grants "are breathing new life into our economy," said Alving, whose National Center for Research

Resources provides infrastructure support.

Alving said the money will help create and preserve jobs for lab technicians, research assistants, students and those who design, build and maintain research buildings.

More construction is in the campus' future. University and Children's plan new patient-care towers, said Dr. Richard Krugman, UCSD School of Medicine dean.

A national reputation and a more convenient locale with two nearby major highways and easier access to

Denver International Airport have fueled the growth, Sokol said.

The sprawling campus with its new facilities also is a magnet for top-flight clinicians and researchers, Sokol said.

"They see this gigantic new campus with Children's, CU and the VA," Sokol said, "and it's almost infectious."

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