

CU Cancer Center ranked one of the best in the nation ^[1]

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By **Cathy Beuten** | *CU system*

The CU Cancer Center – through its clinical partner, the University of Colorado Hospital (UCH) – has been steadily climbing in the annual U.S. News Best Hospitals report ^[2], moving into the Top 15 for the first time with a No. 15 national ranking in cancer services.

The cancer center also scored high marks locally in 5280 Magazine's Top Doctors issue ^[3].

The CU Cancer Center, which ranked No. 23 in the country in 2013 and 44th in 2010, received perfect scores in the areas of survival (much better than expected), advanced technologies, patient services and patient volume.

CU Cancer Center docs continue to be innovators and leaders in cancer treatment, drug development and researching the disease.



“The latest U.S. News rankings confirm what we at CU Cancer Center already know – the cancer care and research at UCH is the best in Colorado and the Rocky Mountain region and among the best in the nation,” said Dan Theodorescu [4], right, M.D., Ph.D., CU Cancer Center director and professor of surgery (urology) and pharmacology.

The annual U.S. News rankings, in their 25th year, analyze nearly 5,000 hospitals to recognize those that excel in treating the most challenging patients.

Examples of major scientific discoveries by CU Cancer Center members:

- Discovered the role of RNA as an enzyme (Nobel Prize 1989), which paved the way for understanding how cells grow and can become malignant.
- Founded the Aptamer field, which gave rise to revolutionary diagnostic tools to detect cancer in the blood and other body fluids.
- Invented COXEN technology underlying new precision medicine approaches in cancer,

allowing individualized therapy assignment among known drugs.



- Developed methodologies for chemically synthesizing DNA (National Medal of Science 2006), which greatly contributed to the genome revolution in biology and medicine
- Characterized the T cell receptor, the molecule T cells use to recognize an antigen (Paul Ehrlich and Ludwig Darmstädter Prize 2007) underlying many approaches to immunotherapy for cancer.
- Developed biomarker to detect ALK mutation, tailoring crizotinib therapy only to those lung cancer patients who would benefit from the drug.
- Contributed in establishing a critical role of androgens in breast and bladder cancer,

paving the way for new therapies that block androgen action in these cancers.

- Discovered and developed the “first in class” drug against Ral, a protein that drives the growth of multiple cancer types.



“As Colorado’s only comprehensive cancer center, as designated by the National Cancer Institute, our clinical partners such as UCH are helping us provide state-of-the-art care for patients as well as realize our goal of translating science into life through our large portfolio of clinical trials,” Theodorescu said.

It’s no wonder then, that faculty from the CU School of Medicine filled more than half the roster – more than 170 of 334 docs noted – of the 5280’s Top Doctors issue for 2014, which this year focused on cancer care.

Doctors whose research is improving and saving lives every day include:

- Dr. Barish Edil [5], right center, a complex general surgical oncologist at UCH, is conducting promising pancreatic cancer vaccine research [6] that has the potential to boost the body’s inherent ability to fight the disease.
- Dr. Lia Gore [7], lower right, in 2003 founded Children’s Hospital Colorado’s Experimental Therapeutics Program, where new treatments for children with cancer are tested and developed [8]. It’s a place where children who weren’t given a chance by anyone else continue to beat the odds.
- Theodorescu is developing a bladder cancer urine test. Although this type of bladder cancer has a high five-year survival rate when caught early (as high as 98 percent), bladder cancer patients are at a high risk for recurrence.

Those are only a few examples of the more than 170 UCH doctors noted in 95 specialties. The 5280 Top Docs honor is determined annually by peer physicians who are asked to select physicians they would trust to care for themselves and their families.

With the exceptional care and prevention research and application, the CU Cancer Center is further establishing itself as a leader, benefiting the lives of cancer patients in Colorado and across the globe.

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