

# CEO News & Views

From Bruce Schreffel, President and CEO of University of Colorado Hospital

November 12, 2007



## We're Going Tobacco-Free

When I was growing up, my father was the smoker in our household. As the health hazards to him and to the family became clearer, I'm afraid he was gradually pushed to do his smoking in ever more distant places. First, he limited himself to only one room in the house and, at last, smoking outside. It was uncomfortable for all of us, although dad was certainly the hands-down loser in the bargain.

Since then, the rest of America's smokers have followed him to progressively segregated places outside and beyond. The reasons are obvious: it's a horrible habit that's dangerous to the smoker and to everyone breathing near the smoker. It has been tied to all manner of virulent cancers, organ failures and lung diseases. It affects the eyes, the nose, the larynx, the skin, the gums. It constricts the vascular system. And, among many other woeful impacts, tobacco is an incredibly powerful addiction that can rob the strongest individuals of the very foundation of personal freedom: their will.

**Target: July 1.** University of Colorado Hospital, as you know, already consigns smokers to shacks outside our buildings. Yet we are an organization solemnly dedicated to the health of our patients as well as health of our community. Hosting behavior that actually endangers people violates our mission. And tolerating it, as we have for so long, simply endangers more.

So this week we are announcing that the hospital is going to go tobacco-free as of July 1, 2008.

At that time, hospital policy will ban using tobacco products

anywhere on the parts of the campus the hospital occupies.

(Across the street, Children's Hospital is already smoke-free. Last week, CU Regent Michael Carrigan floated the idea of making all University of Colorado properties – including those that share the Anschutz Medical Campus with us – smoke-free at some point in the future.)



**A lot of anxiety?** During the next seven months, we're going to do everything possible to help smokers adjust. At least until July 1, we will offer cessation resources, counseling and help to any UCH employees and patients who wish to quit. (We estimate that only 6% of our 3,400 employees actually do smoke.) After that date, using tobacco products on our property will be cause for an escalating series of disciplinary actions.

There will be two minor exceptions. Patients – not employees – in both Psych and at CeDAR will be allowed to smoke in certain areas for the time being. Best medical practices suggest imposing smoking restrictions on some Psych and CeDAR patients can actually impede their recovery from other conditions. There are promising drug therapies that might be able to help them soon, but until then we are making an exception for them.

We know that, given the power of this addiction, the new policy is going to cause a lot of anxiety among both care team members and patients who smoke. Good questions about their personal rights are bound to arise. And we are indeed asking them to change their behavior on our property.

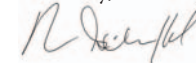
**Help for smokers as well as non-smokers.** To us, however, this is also an environmental issue of eliminating dangerous pollutants. Above it all, we strive to be among the very best health care organizations and places to work in the world. Neither great hospitals nor great places to work can responsibly allow some individuals to put its patients, visitors, vendors and colleagues at risk. That extends to all our construction projects, medical protocols, food preparation, employment practices and more. Now, it includes tobacco use.

You'll be getting lots of details through the next weeks and months about the policy, how we'll be enforcing it, and ways we can help our colleagues as well as our patients live better, freer and healthier lives.

## And Something Just For You

Northfield, the new shopping district just north of I-70 at Quebec, is holding a special "UCH Shopping Days At Northfield" for you Nov. 19-21. With your UCH or UCH Affiliate badge, you get a coupon book plus a \$5 gift card to use at any of the district's shops and restaurants. You also will be entered into a drawing for a Grand Prize. Details and maps will follow in your inbox.

Sincerely,



Bruce Schreffel, President and CEO



## Goblins, Kids & Bologna

On Oct. 31, we held our 2nd Annual Boo Bash and it was bigger than last year's. We had about 450 kids roaming the hospital in all manner of costumes, plus I-don't-know-how-many employees, physicians, nurses and execs looking distinctly different from the employees, physicians, nurses and execs they are every other day of the year. (Trying to prove that art imitates life, I came as "Fulla Bologna.") In all, it was a fun event that let us affirm life a little even as we went about trying to save and extend it.

**Kudos to:** Many thanks to the organizers, including the Employee Stakeholders Group and, specifically, Kim Herman, Teresa Rodriguez and Marianne McCormick.

