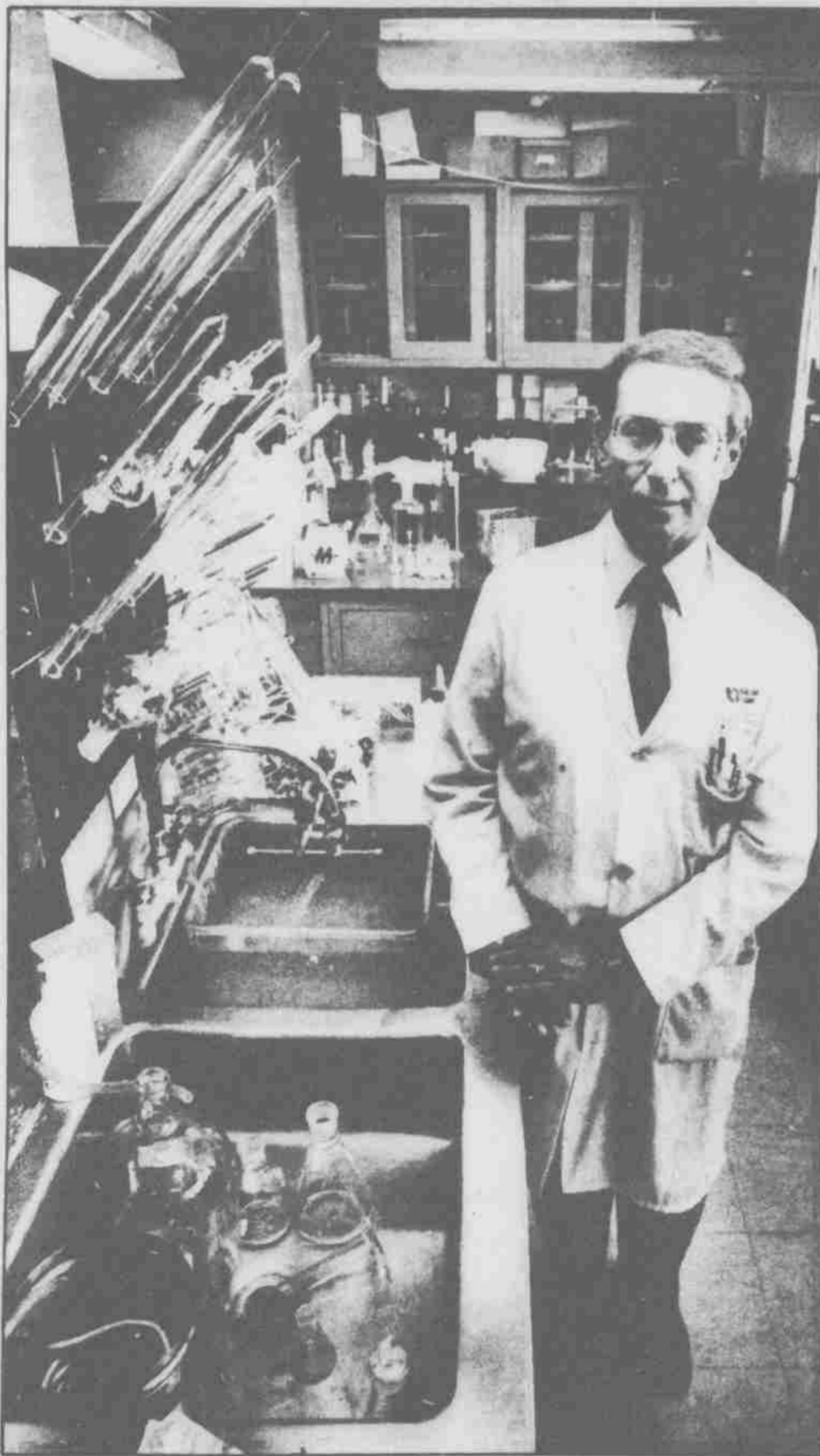


University of Nebraska Medical Center

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Photos, clockwise from upper right: Geriatric's department staff physician, Susan Scholer, left, and fourth year medical student, Darrell Wilburn check Ann West as they make rounds. The liver transplant team of Bob Duckworth, left, Dr. Pat Wood, Dr. Byers Shaw and RNSMN Laurie Williams sit in the department library. Dr. Jon Vanderhoff, director of the Swanson Center and Jennifer Baily, UNO junior and part-time employee of the medical center is one of the nutrition labs. Dr. Philip Issenberg in one of his research labs.



Experts: UNMC still excellent Reduced budget encourages specialization

Despite reductions and eliminations of some programs because of budget cuts, the NU Medical Center is still an excellent institution that is nationally recognized in many areas, experts say.

Gov. Bob Kerrey said this excellence is due to Chancellor Charles Andrews' efforts to recruit some of the nation's top people in the areas of gerontology, liver transplants, nutrition and cancer research.

Two of the people in UNMC's gerontology program, Dr. Jane Potter and Dr. Denham Harman, were cited by University of Harvard Medical School Director of Geriatrics Dr. John Rowe as individuals important to UNMC's excellence.

"Denham Harman is world famous for his Free Radical Reactions Theory of Aging and Jane Potter, who was educated at the National Institute on Aging, is an excellent gerontologist," Rowe said.

Dr. Russell Mills, director of geriatrics at the University of Kansas Medical School, agreed with Rowe's assessment of UNMC's geriatrics program.

"They have a very active geriatrician out there doing something about it. Jane Potter has worked hard at getting geriatrics into the curriculum," Mills said.

Potter, who is the director of the geriatrics program, said UNMC is not ranked as a national leader in geriatrics, but has the opportunity to become one because of its commitment

to the program.

"It's extremely unusual to find interest in an area like geriatrics at all levels from the chancellor through the deans of the various colleges," she said.

Potter said she is currently in the process of recruiting two individuals to help with the geriatrics program. The College of Pharmacy is recruiting a geriatric pharmacologist and the department of psychology is recruiting a geropsychiatrist.

Four experts in the area of liver transplants were brought from the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center to help start the UNMC liver transplant program. One of the experts, Bob Duckworth, said the excellence of UNMC's liver transplant program is attributed to "people, and not just those from Pittsburgh. It's a collaborative effort that has worked well at the medical center, and probably better than anywhere else."

Thomas Dunlay, who works at the Great Plains Studies Center at UNL, was the third person to be given a liver transplant since UNMC began the program in July.

He said he received excellent care at the medical center and chose to have his operation there because "it's one of the relatively few places where they do liver transplants, and it's certainly the closest."

Professor Philip Issenberg said UNMC's Eppley Institute for Research in Cancer and Allied Diseases is also recognized nationally. The institute has received a cancer support grant

from the National Cancer Institute. "There are only 15 grants in the country given to cancer laboratory centers. That's a pretty elite group," Issenberg said.

Another nationally recognized program is nutrition-gastroenterology research conducted at UNMC's Swanson Center.

"In several areas in the medical center in gastroenterology and liver disease our people have been recognized for national contributions and their research has been quoted," said Dr. John Vanderhoof, director of the Swanson Center.

"I believe very strongly that we must build on our strengths," Andrews said. "We're not going to try to be a Harvard. But the areas we pick to specialize in will be as good as Harvard."

"We have set priorities. We have decided that what we do, we'll do well," he said.

"(Andrews) has dropped off some programs that he doesn't have full funding for. And he doesn't run anything mediocre," Kerrey said. "He's trying to target his resources into areas that are important."

"For our plan to finally work," Andrews said, "the Legislature has to agree to allow us to keep a tuition increase and not decrease the state budget."

Last November the Legislature cut \$914,000 from UNMC's budget. When the current Legislative session ends, Andrews said, this may increase to \$2 million.

