



Another first

In 2018, UI Health Care was the nation's first medical center to offer patients IDx-DR, a technology that uses artificial intelligence to diagnose diabetic retinopathy long before it can lead to blindness.

UI ophthalmologist Michael Abràmoff, MD, conceived and designed the technology and created a company to produce it for widespread clinical use.

IDx-DR is the latest example of a first pioneered by University of Iowa researchers and physicians. Here's a sampling, through the decades, of some of our other medical firsts.



Everyone counts

From our beginning in 1870, we've enrolled women and men on an equal basis. We were the country's first college of medicine to do so from the start.

Blood for healing

Protecting the public through an adequate supply of donated blood, University of Iowa pathologists research, perfect, and implement one of the world's first modern blood banking systems, in 1939.



Clubfoot solution

One of nature's most common birth defects is clubfoot, where an infant's foot is rolled into a tight ball instead of extended as a foot. A University of Iowa bone specialist, Dr. Ignacio Ponseti, invented a treatment using a series of plaster casts to extend the foot without painful and expensive surgery.

On the genetic forefront

Researchers and clinicians (physicians) make groundbreaking genetic discoveries for cystic fibrosis, in 1993, and glaucoma, in 1997, on which later therapies are based.

Pre-1900s

1910s

Focus on the brain

In 1919, the relatively new study of brain disorders results in Iowa forming one of the country's first ever departments of neurology, a branch of medicine dealing with the nervous system.



1930s

1940s

Modern aspirin

Buffered aspirin, which contains a coating to protect the stomach, is invented at Iowa through collaborations among rheumatologists, biochemists, and pharmacists, in 1945.

1940s

1960s



Radios restore sight

In 1962, innovative ophthalmologists at Iowa create a national network of amateur radio operators to help obtain donor eye tissue from accident victims. It becomes a model for today's eye banks.

1980s



Restored hearing

Pioneering research, engineering, and surgery combine in 1982 to successfully place a cochlear implant in a deaf child, allowing him to hear sounds that can be interpreted as speech.

1990s

2000s

Enter the robot

Physician-researchers collaborate with engineers and computer simulation experts to develop national firsts in robotic stomach and intestinal surgeries, in 2003, and in driving simulations for patients with brain disorders, 2001.