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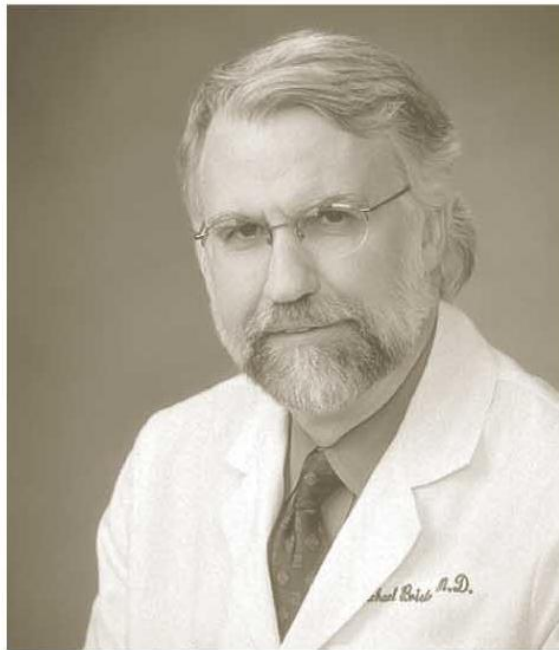
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**Dr. Michael R. Bristow**

**Professor of Cardiology, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center; Co-Director, University of Colorado Cardiovascular Institute; Founder, Myogen and ARCA Discovery.**

**Colorado's Triple Threat:  
Dr. Michael R. Bristow  
Clinician, Researcher and Entrepreneur**

From the university medical lab where he worked as a young student, to a distinguished career as a clinician and entrepreneur, he is still driven by the same spark -- discovery research in cardiology.

Dr. Michael R. Bristow is a professor of cardiology at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, co-director of the University of Colorado Cardiovascular Institute, and founder of Myogen, one of Colorado's best bioscience success stories. "Everything I do," he says, "is designed to develop new approaches for the treatment of heart failure."

He graduated from the University of Illinois - Chicago with a combined MD degree and a PhD in pharmacology. Perhaps it is this ability to blend fields of study and areas of expertise that allows Bristow to enjoy success even when straddling the often conflicting worlds of science and business. In any case, to Bristow it's all academic.

"If you want your discovery to turn into something useful, you have to become an entrepreneur," he says. It helps if the entrepreneur also thinks like a clinician. "You have to understand the needs of your patients because that's where you get your insight. Out of the blue, something will click that you haven't thought of before."

Coming up with a new paradigm is not for the faint of heart. "Science is a highly skeptical business, says Bristow. "The typical response to a new idea is massive rejection." Keeping the funding going until people start to believe in the discovery takes endurance, he says. Success often depends on luck and persistence.

Bristow founded the University of Colorado Cardiovascular Institute in 1998 with Leslie Leinwand to attract top talent to CU by uniting researchers based on the Boulder and Health Sciences Center campuses. They developed a world class molecular genetics program now housed at the bioscience park at Fitzsimons. To generate revenue for the institute, Bristow decided to commercialize their research by starting a separate company with partners Leinwand, Eric Olson, and Ben Perryman.

The new biopharmaceutical company became Myogen, a Colorado success story whose stock is now traded on NASDAQ. Myogen has three cardiovascular drugs in late stage development that were in-licensed by leveraging Bristow's intellectual property. It also has an extensive preclinical drug discovery program in partnership with pharmaceutical giant Novartis. It can take 10 years or more from target discovery to drug approval, so licensing-in something that already went through the early phases of clinical trials is an attractive model for starting a biopharmaceutical company. In fact, it has since been adopted by several other start-ups.

In 2004, Bristow founded ARCA Discovery, a company that uses a version of this model to develop drug therapy targeted at cardiovascular gene variants that are important in serious cardiovascular diseases, such as heart failure.

Every business decision he makes is motivated by saving lives and improving outcomes for patients with cardiovascular disease. "The best way to save lives is to keep getting new and effective products to patients," says Bristow. "It took us 25 years to develop beta blockers for heart failure but now it's the most effective single therapy for the most important chronic cardiovascular disease in industrialized societies. Now, ARCA is working on a newer improved beta blocker, targeted to gene variants where the clinical response is much greater than in the general population."

Bristow sees a bright future for Colorado biotechnology. He believes the entrepreneurial spirit is ingrained in Colorado's frontier culture, and that its quality of life, talented workforce, and savvy venture capital companies give the state an edge. He is encouraged that the University of Colorado does not penalize faculty for wanting to commercialize their ideas, and that its tech transfer program has become a major positive force in promoting entrepreneurship.

He tells budding entrepreneurs to believe in themselves. Don't worry about rejections and be tenacious. Find a reliable investment partner and keep moving forward, even when everyone says it won't work.

"When I hear people being irrationally negative I know I must be on to something good," says Bristow. "It makes me more determined."

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## Colorado BioScience ASSOCIATION

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Maggie Chamberlin Holben, owner of this website, has recently joined the Board of Directors for the Colorado BioScience Association and is making this page available to the CBSA to enhance media awareness of the association and its members.

[Link to more information about ARCA Discovery](#)

[E-mail Dr. Bristow](#)

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