The University of Colorado Department of Medicine (later to become the School of Medicine) first opened its doors in 1883 in the “Old Main” building on the Boulder Campus (Fig. 2). The Department consisted of 2 rooms in Old Main, along with two professors, two instructors, and two hastily recruited students. Joseph A. Sewell, MD served as the first Dean with the school having no hospital, no medical library, and a very modest budget. It could take pride, however, in that it did not charge tuition and it accepted women on an equal basis with men. This latter policy led the Journal of the American Medical Association to predict a rapid demise for the institution. It, nevertheless, survived building its first hospital in 1885 accommodating 30 patients (Fig. 3), and its first building “Medical Hall” in 1888.
In 1897 a second University Hospital, accommodating 40 patients, was built on the Boulder campus but is soon became clear that to survive, the School needed to move to Denver. In 1924, the entire four-year medical school, by then under the leadership of Dean Charles, Meader moved from Boulder to Denver, which by then was the 25th largest city in the United States with 270,000 people. The new hospital was known as Colorado General later renamed University Hospital (Fig. 4). It remained in this location until 2007 when the medical school and the University Hospital moved to the new Anschutz campus at the site on the previous Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Aurora (Fig. 5).

Neurosurgery at the University started with Dr. Jaeger (Fig. 6) who, was the first neurosurgeon to practice in Colorado. Dr Jaeger, a general surgeon, trained in neurosurgery with Walter Dandy in Baltimore, Md. for nine months. His training was purely “observational” and he subsequently returned to Denver in 1930 to be in private practice and hold the title of the first
Chief of Neurosurgery at the University of Colorado. It was not until 1951, with the arrival of Maitland Baldwin (Fig. 7), that the University of Colorado had its first full-time neurosurgeon. Dr. Baldwin was born in 1918 in New York City, N.Y. and attended Harvard University (Boston, Mass.) as an undergraduate. His medical training consisted of an internship in surgery at the Queen's University Medical School, residencies under Drs. Wilder Penfield and Arthur Elvidge; and training in neuropathology and surgery with Dr. William Cone. He attended McGill University (Montreal, Quebec, Canada) from 1947 – 1951, acquiring a diploma in Neurological Surgery and a Master of Science in Neurology. He remained at the University of Colorado for two years, establishing the Division of Neurosurgery as part of the Department of General Surgery. In 1953, he was lured away by the offer of full-time clinical investigation and research, to become the Chief of Surgical Neurology at National Institutes of Health (Bethesda, Md.) where he founded the Surgical Neurology Branch of the National Institute of Neurological Disease and Blindness.

Shortly following Dr. Baldwin's departure, W. Keasley Welch (Fig. 8) took over the job of Chairman of the Division of Neurosurgery and established the first Neurosurgery Residency Program in 1954. Dr. Welch, born in 1920, attended Yale Medical School (New Haven, Conn.) doing his internship in New Haven and subsequently did his Neurosurgery residency at the Montreal Neurological Institute (Montreal, Quebec, Canada) under Drs. Wilder Penfield and William V. Cone. Following graduation, Dr. Welch worked at Henry Ford Hospital (Detroit, Mich.) before being called into the Army to serve in the Korean War. During that time he became Chief of the Neurosurgical Department at Letterman Army Hospital (San Francisco, Calif.).
The first resident to graduate under Dr. Welch at the University of Colorado was Thomas Craigmile in 1957. Dr. Craigmile started his training at Northwestern (Chicago, Ill.) under Loyal Davis, prior to transferring to Colorado. Dr. Craigmile remained in practice in Denver his entire working career. Under Dr. Welch’s nearly 20 year leadership, the program prospered. In 1971, Dr. Welch was offered the position as the Franc D. Ingraham Professor of Neurosurgery at Harvard Medical School and left Denver for Boston, Mass.

Wolff Kirsch took over as Division Head in 1971 and over the next 4 years was able to convince the University to elevate the division of Neurosurgery to Department status. In 1975 he was named interim Department Chairman, but unfortunately, was unable to maintain the Neurosurgery residency accreditation. Consequently, the Neurosurgery Department dissolved. Following several years of turmoil, the University recruited Glenn Kindt from the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor). Dr. Kindt, a native of Michigan, was acting Chairman of the Division of Neurosurgery at Michigan following Richard Schneider’s retirement. Dr. Kindt arrived at the University of Colorado in 1981. The Division was rebuilt and the residency program re-established in 1983. Dr. Kindt remained Chair of Neurosurgery from 1981 through 2000 and was responsible for separating it from General Surgery and re-establishing it as a Department in 1999. Starting with Dr. Kindt’s leadership, the Department has grown substantially with faculty currently numbering 18 full-time Neurosurgeons (including four Pediatric Neurosurgeons), two Neurologists, four research PhDs and two Neuropsychologists. In 2007 the residency program expanded from one to two residents per year and the training program offers fellowship training in Pediatric Neurosurgery and Neuro-critical Care.

Following Dr. Kindt’s retirement, Issam Awad served as Chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery from 2001 to 2003, followed by the current Chairman, Kevin Lillehei.