

# Omaha World-Herald

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## Reliable workers + good patients = expansion location

➔ Two Omaha natives bring their Arizona-based drug research company to the metro area.

By CHRISTOPHER BURBACH  
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The Omaha metropolitan area looked like the right place to grow when Mark Hanley and David Bruggeman decided to expand the Arizona-based pharmaceutical research company they head — and not only because they're Omaha natives.

"It's the Omaha work ethic," said Hanley, chief executive officer of Clinical Research Advantage Inc.

The company recently opened offices within three medical clinics — one in Omaha, one in Bellevue and one in Council Bluffs. Its leaders expect to expand to six locations by the fourth quarter of 2011.

Drug companies recommended that the firm expand in Omaha, Hanley said, and he and Bruggeman had done business in Omaha before with another company.

Company leaders knew they could find "good, strong employees" in

Omaha, Hanley said. They named Tony Romero director of operations. Romero had worked for Creighton University for 19 years managing clinical trials.



Hanley

Hanley said he's confident that the company also can find good subjects.

Good patients lead to solid research.

"We need patients that are compliant, patients that will follow up and do what they say they'll do," he said. That includes logging medications and symptoms and keeping follow-up appointments.

Clinical Research Advantage has 11 sites in the metropolitan Phoenix area. It acquired five sites in Las Vegas this spring.

The current Omaha-area sites are Internal Medicine Specialists, the office of Dr. David Allen, in Omaha; Bellevue Family Practice, the office of Dr. Robert Saniuk, in Bellevue; and Ridge Family Practice, the office of Dr. Jennifer Kay, in Council Bluffs.

Drug and medical device companies hire Clinical Research Advantage to conduct Phase II, III and IV medical trials. The drugs have already been through Phase I trials, which test their initial safety on human subjects. The later trials test such things as the drugs' effectiveness and best dose levels.

The company usually has about 270 trials under way. It is testing flu vaccines and treatments for numerous ailments, including hypertension and diabetes.

"From psychiatry to toenail fungus, everything from head to toe," Romero said.

Clinical Research Advantage pays doctors to be the principal in-

vestigators, and the doctors draw the research subjects from among their own patients. That provides medical histories that researchers know are correct.

The patients receive promising new medications and careful follow-up for free while participating in the studies, plus small stipends, Hanley said. Independent review boards oversee the work.

Hanley said his company doesn't have the high overhead of a company like Qualia Clinical Services, which went bankrupt in Omaha in 2009, three years after opening a 140-bed facility for Phase I studies that required patients to stay several nights.

Clinical Research Advantage uses space in existing doctor offices, and patients don't stay overnight. The company places a research coordinator in each doctor office.

Including management, the initial number of Omaha employees is six to eight.

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