



Dr. Rifat Latifi Receives **Prestigious American College of** **Surgeons/Pfizer International** **Surgical Volunteerism Award**

Contact: [Jo Marie Barkley](#), 520-626-7219

Sept. 22, 2015

Rifat Latifi, MD, trauma surgeon in the [University of Arizona Department of Surgery](#), received the 2015 American College of Surgeons (ACS)/Pfizer Surgical Volunteerism Award for his work on establishing telemedicine and e-health programs in underdeveloped nations, especially those recovering from conflict and in need of major rebuilding of their health-care systems.

The award is presented to ACS fellows and members who are committed to giving back to society through significant contributions to surgical care as volunteers and whose altruism, vision, leadership and dedication provide models to emulate and whose contributions have made a lasting difference.

Dr. Latifi's telemedicine program began in Kosovo in 2000, where the medical infrastructure was destroyed during the war in 1999. He and his collaborators built a state-of-the-art telemedicine program that included technical infrastructure, virtual-education programs and videoconferencing capabilities. It also included an electronic library that uses the Health InterNetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI), a World Health Organization program that provides free or very low cost online access to the major journals in biomedical and related social sciences to local, not-for-profit institutions in developing countries. The Initiate-Build-Operate-Transfer (IBOT) model designed by Dr. Latifi and his collaborators ensures the program's sustainability and has successfully been replicated in Albania and the island nation of Cabo Verde, Africa, and currently is present in 44 hospitals in both countries.

Being founder and president of the not-for-profit International Virtual e-Hospital (IVeH), Dr. Latifi was able to introduce telemedicine, telehealth, virtual-educational programs and seminars through the IVeH network to fulfill the need for continuing medical education (CME). The telemedicine centers can be used for disaster preparedness to educate medical staff and improve educational capacities as an e-learning platform. Dr. Latifi and his team trained both physicians and administrators to operate these systems.

Dr. Latifi, UA professor of surgery at the UA [College of Medicine](#) and professor at the UA Mel and Enid Zuckerman [College of Public Health](#), is a member of the American Telemedicine Association, vice-president of the International Society for Telemedicine and e-Health and chair of the subcommittee on telemedicine for the Health Information Technology Committee of the ACS. In addition, he is an adviser to the Multinational Telemedicine for Disaster Management for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and he previously served on the advisory board of the European Space Agency.

Dr. Latifi is author or coauthor of more than 200 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. He also has authored/co-authored and edited 13 books on surgical nutrition, advanced laparoscopy,

telemedicine, trauma and complex surgical procedures and serves on editorial boards of several peer-reviewed journals.

The award will be presented formally at the [2015 ACS Clinical Congress](#) in Chicago Oct. 6.

About the University of Arizona Health Sciences

The University of Arizona Health Sciences is the statewide leader in biomedical research and health professions training. The UA Health Sciences includes the UA Colleges of Medicine (Phoenix and Tucson), Nursing, Pharmacy and Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, with main campus locations in Tucson and the growing Phoenix Biomedical Campus in downtown Phoenix. From these vantage points, the UA Health Sciences reaches across the state of Arizona and the greater desert Southwest to provide cutting-edge health education, research, patient care and community outreach services. A major economic engine, the UA Health Sciences employs almost 5,000 people, has nearly 1,000 faculty members and garners more than \$126 million in research grants and contracts annually. For more information: <http://ahsc.arizona.edu>