



## Books Without Borders

**RATHER THAN LET UNUSED MEDICAL BOOKS** and journals gather dust on the shelf, UCLA medical alumni, students, faculty and emeriti have donated their texts to a program launched earlier this year by the Medical Alumni Association (MAA) to collect educational materials for hospitals and medical schools in Iraq.

Books Without Borders has been a collaboration of the MAA and the U.S. Army, the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, UCLA School of Nursing, UCLA Health Sciences Store and the Los Angeles County Fire Department to collect and donate used texts, journals and reference materials published since 1994.

Response from the UCLA community has been outstanding. One group from the San Francisco Bay sent a container filled with 100 pounds of materials. A professor in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA donated her microscope from medical school. More than 2,000 medical texts and journals – nearly 5,000 pounds of material – have been delivered to medical schools and hospitals throughout Iraq by the U.S. Army.

The materials are used to teach medical students, nurses, laboratory technicians, EMTs and others in ancillary fields. Providing the tools for Iraqi doctors and medical students to improve their skills and education will be a critical step in reconstruction.

Much of the decay in the Iraqi healthcare system began with the reign of Saddam Hussein. The medical system became very isolated

during the last decade of his regime, and doctors weren't allowed to go outside of the country to train. It really shut down progress in medicine. Today, Iraqi doctors are working to restore the medical-education system at all levels and in all fields, and they are grateful for donations of medical textbooks or journals. It is a difficult effort, however, because insurgents have targeted medical professionals, and many doctors have fled the country.

Any materials published since 1994 are considered current in Iraq. While Iraq's doctors and students would benefit from all the information that is available on the Internet, the lack of electricity, slow access and limited availability of computers make it difficult for most doctors and students to access its resources.

English is the language of medical instruction in Iraq. Books covering the basics of anatomy, physiology and pharmacology are in particular demand, and multiple copies will be beneficial for the medical schools and reference libraries at Tikrit Teaching Hospital and Mosul University. There are several nursing and vocational schools across the north of Iraq, including Diyala and Tikrit, that also needed materials.

Though the program is no longer accepting donations of books, it still is receiving journals. To donate, call MAA Director Valerie Walker at (310) 794-4025, or email [vwalker@support.ucla.edu](mailto:vwalker@support.ucla.edu).

—Dr. Laura Pacha, M.D. '98

### About the Writer

**DR. LAURA PACHA, M.D. '98**, grew up an Army brat, following her father as he moved from base to base around the country. Today, she is a major in the U.S. Army. In August 2006, she was deployed with the 25th Infantry Division to northern Iraq, where she served as the public-health officer responsible for more than 20,000 soldiers, service members, contractors and civilian Department of Defense employees in the region. Dr. Pacha attended UCLA medical school on an Army Health Professions Scholarship and completed her residency in preventive medicine at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.



(TOP) Tikrit Medical College in Salah ad Din Province is one of the recipients of Books Without Borders donations. (LEFT) Dr. Laura Pacha, M.D. '98, in Iraq.

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