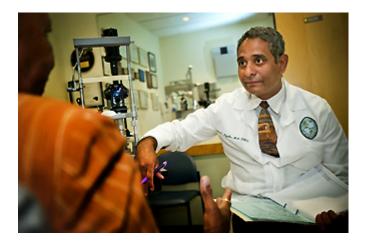# Online Medical Course Spans Continents

April 28, 2011 2:00 AM Arthur Nead
anead@tulane.edu

This spring, Tulane doctors led by Dr. Ramesh Ayyala joined medical residents on two continents to complete their first review course for the ophthalmology board exam, live via the Internet.

Dr. Ramesh Ayyala, director of the Tulane ophthalmology residency program, organizes an online review course of residents preparing for their certification exams. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

The free, two-day course allowed more than 250 residents to review materials for their certification exams.

"Residents from most of the ophthalmology programs in the USA, Canada, Colombia and Guatemala participated in the live course," says Ayyala, professor of ophthalmology and director of the ophthalmology residency program at Tulane University School of Medicine.

"We have been experimenting with online courses since Hurricane Katrina, but this is the largest course I have ever done," Ayyala says.

Following Katrina, he developed an online website for teaching medical students and medical residents. Called PostitMD.com, the site allows users to upload, post and share images, surgical videos, lectures and other presentations and information. It can be accessed from anywhere.

Building on this platform, Ayyala developed the review course as a live program, including eight presenters logging on from different parts of the country. Forty-two pages of test material were mailed out in advance, and the recorded lectures were posted to a website.

Participants can access the site to review the course materials again. "More than 400 of the residents logged onto the website during its first week," says Ayyala.

At the conclusion a survey was administered. "The results speak volumes about the success of the course," he says. "Ninety-five percent thought the online course was an excellent idea and that it is the future of medical education, and content was ranked as good or excellent by 96 percent."

Ayyala believes the course will be a good model to use in the future.