

It's home to Afghanistan for global health scholar

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Improving women's health in Afghanistan is a passion for Dr. Palwasha Anwari, a doctor from Farah Province. After studying epidemiology as a Fulbright scholar at Tulane University, she plans to return home to work on the problem of childbirth death rates in Afghanistan, which are among the highest in the world.



After receiving her master's degree at Tulane, Fulbright scholar Dr. Palwasha Anwari will research maternal health care in Afghanistan. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

"It's a big problem in my country," says Anwari, "We have a high maternal mortality rate and a high infant mortality rate, so improved prenatal care is one way to prevent this." A 2008 graduate from Kabul Medical University, she will receive a master of science degree from the [Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine](#) on Saturday (May 19).

The country's mountainous terrain makes access to health care difficult for people in some regions.

“Due to geography, and because of security issues in some areas, there often are no health professionals to provide care and deliver children,” Anwari says.

In 2002, after the collapse of the Taliban, the Ministry of Public Health launched two major interventions: an increase in the coverage of the basic package of health services and the establishment of a midwifery program.

“The policy of our government was to reach those people to decrease the mortality rates,” she says. “The Ministry of Public Health recruits women from those areas, trains them as midwives or health educators, and then sends them back to live there and provide care.”

Anwari, whose thesis is a study on the “Impact of Social Support on Prenatal Care Seeking Among Pregnant Women in the Katrina Recovery Area,” wants to utilize her research expertise to monitor maternal healthcare trends in Afghanistan.

“And in addition to being involved in research, I plan to provide lectures for health professionals with the Ministry of Public Health and for medical students to transfer the knowledge I have gained here at Tulane.”