

On the front lines fighting flu

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Tulane University alumnus Dr. Andrew Corwin, an infectious diseases expert, serves on the front lines combating emerging strains of influenza such as swine flu from the H1N1 virus and the recent headliner virus H792 linked to bird flu in China.



Tulane alumnus Dr. Andrew Corwin, pictured here with a Papuan woman and her child while investigating a flu outbreak in Indonesia, is on the front lines of combating infectious diseases. (Photo from Dr. Andrew Corwin)

A 1978 Tulane grad, Corwin received a master of [public health](#) degree from Tulane in 1980. He has been country director in Lao People's Democratic Republic in Southeast Asia for the influenza division of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention since 2006.

His collaborative work to build influenza surveillance and response in Lao led to the nation receiving a designation as a World Health Organization National Influenza Center in 2010 and to the donation of more than 300,000 influenza vaccines to the country by Walgreens, the retail pharmacy chain.

Corwin credits his years at Tulane with exposing him to an international milieu quite

different from his New Hampshire home. After he graduated, he pursued a global military career hunting infectious disease in war-torn and distant locales. His Navy career took him to Egypt, Somalia, Japan, Korea, Panama and Bethesda, Md.

Now a retired Navy captain, he spent the last 15 years of his military career at the U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit No. 2 in Jakarta, Indonesia. While there he founded and directed the WHO-SEARO Collaborating Center for Emerging and Reemerging Diseases, building up outbreak response capabilities throughout Southeast Asia.

He has worked on shifting the focus from the initial response to the bird flu caused by the H5N1 virus to building a surveillance and outbreak response system that not only documents seasonal influenza patterns but also provides the foundation for vaccine initiatives and prevention. The model created in Lao has led to influenza vaccine programs for low- and middle-income countries.

Madeline Vann is a freelance writer who holds a master of public health degree from Tulane.