

## A global classroom

August 21, 2013 11:00 AM

Ryan Rivet  
[rivet@tulane.edu](mailto:rivet@tulane.edu)

Dr. Douglas Slakey spent six months teaching a course to Vietnamese doctors and medical students to help them improve medical care for patients with end-stage kidney disease. Despite teaching pupils located in Hue, Vietnam, Slakey didn't have to take a sabbatical, and other than two visits totaling three weeks, he was able to stay in New Orleans.

The funding for the course came from the Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF), which was established in 2000 by Congress to strengthen the U.S.-Vietnam relationship through educational exchanges. When he was awarded the scholarship from the VEF, Slakey saw an opportunity to use technology to remotely teach an in-depth course.

"In between the two visits at the beginning and then the end of the course, I gave live weekly lectures over the Internet to physicians and medical students from Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy," says Slakey, chairman of the department of surgery at the Tulane School of Medicine.

As the word spread about the program, the number of viewers for each lecture continued to grow.

"When it first started, Hue University expected about 35 or 40 physicians and a similar number of medical students," Slakey says. "By the end of the time, there were well over 100 physicians viewing the lectures from throughout Vietnam."

Slakey says that this type of training is of vital importance as the economy of Vietnam continues to improve. As access to health care increases, physicians can be overwhelmed by having to come up with cost-effective ways to treat kidney disease, which Slakey estimates to be twice as prevalent as in the United States. Using this model, he believes the same lessons can be brought to other developing nations and first-world locales, as well.

"The real highlight for me was the ability to deliver educational materials halfway around the world," says Slakey. "It was really fantastic, and I'm looking forward to see what I can do for follow-up. Not only there, but in other locations, as well."



Dr. Douglas Slakey, chairman of the department of surgery at the Tulane School of Medicine, taught a six-month course for doctors and medical students in Vietnam using a combination of in-person instruction and lectures delivered over the internet. (Photo by Ryan Rivet)