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IT'S HIS CALL OF DUTY *An Afghan-American Doctor's Passion to Help Rebuild His Homeland*

Lemoine, Pa. January 5, 2010: As the associate director of pulmonary medicine at Jamaica Hospital Medical Center in Jamaica, N.Y., Dr. Akram Babury is used to getting calls in the middle of the night. But not one like this.

When Dr. Babury answered his phone, he heard the familiar voice of a colleague. He was calling from the CURE International Hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, to ask a very challenging question: "Why, Dr. Babury, are you not here helping your own people?"

That late-night call in 2007 was the catalyst that spurred Dr. Babury to make a difference in his home country of Afghanistan, a country from which he had been forced to flee in 1982 in the face of the Russian occupation. "I felt like it was my duty to go back and help the Afghan people, especially as an Afghan-American," he said.

So, with the full support of Jamaica Hospital, he has returned to his birth country three times to volunteer his services at CURE International's medical facilities and other hospitals in the city of Kabul. His primary responsibilities were to assist with medical care and conduct critically-needed training sessions for medical professionals in pulmonary medicine. He most recently spent a month in Kabul in October 2009.

Dr. Babury recalled that the first time he returned to the city he didn't know what to expect.

“When I left Kabul in ‘82, it was a beautiful city. But when I came back for the first time, the Kabul I had remembered was gone. It took some time to adjust to this new reality,” he said.

But Dr. Babury also experienced a reconnection with the people of his homeland. His time at CURE Kabul made him realize just how much love he had for the city of his youth.

“There is much suffering, but the good part is that the Afghan people are alive. They want things to improve,” he said. “As I worked with the residents, nurses and doctors, I began to feel very proud of them. Despite many challenges, they are doing an excellent job.”

Every trip has its own set of adventures, stories and unexpected occurrences. But with every trip, Dr. Babury is only more motivated to go back.

“Sometimes it’s hard; but when I see a smile of a patient, I want to go back again and again and again,” he noted.

Dr. Babury has also developed a strong connection with CURE Kabul, serving as a mentor for the medical professionals he has trained. In fact, he still keeps in touch with many of them via email.

He views CURE Kabul’s facilities as one of the most important pieces in his home country’s road to recovery. “We need a thousand hospitals like CURE Kabul, and we need more Americans to support CURE International as an organization,” he explained. “We cannot win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people with [just] force alone. We need health care to [help] ease the suffering of the people.”

About CURE Kabul

Since 2005, CURE Kabul has served the medical needs of the Afghan people through CURE International Hospital of Kabul and CURE International Family Health Center. These facilities specialize in general surgery, obstetrics, gynecology and orthopedics as well as maternal and neonatal intensive care. CURE Kabul also trains medical professionals in family medicine and pathology and conducts Afghanistan's only OB/GYN fellowship program for female physicians. These facilities are operated by CURE International, a U.S.-based nonprofit organization with 10 hospitals throughout the developing world. For more information, please visit www.cureinternational.org.

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