

Yousuf Sadiq, MD, associate professor of gynecology and obstetrics, School of Medicine (left), and S.A.S. Ghazanfar, special consultant to the World Health Organization, inspect new biochemistry and microbiology laboratories at Nangarhar Medical Faculty, a school of medicine in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.



S.A.S. Ghanzanfar (left), Afghanistan's head of medical education, and Engineer Mahmood, dean, faculty of medicine, Nangarhar Medical Faculty, are working with LLU and the World Health Organization to evaluate medical education in Afghanistan.

A partnership with Afghanistan

A WAR-TORN COUNTRY REBUILDS

In southern Asia, northwest of Pakistan, lies the country of Afghanistan. Slightly smaller in size than the state of Texas, the country has been scarred by political and military upheavals during more than 15 years of war.

During the unrest, one-third of the population fled the country, with Pakistan and Iran sheltering more than 3 million refugees apiece.

Loma Linda University's ties with Afghanistan date back to 1955, several years before the 10-year-long Soviet military occupation (which ended on February 15, 1989).

G. Gordon Hadley, MD, former dean, School of Medicine, and president of Sir Run Run Shaw Hospital in Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, was in Vellore, India, at Christian Medical College (CMC) at the time.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' Southern Asia Division had started a program at CMC to train young Adventists to be physicians and health workers. As part of the agreement, Loma Linda University sent professors on a rotating basis to assist in the education program.

"During our time at Vellore," says Dr. Hadley, "the officers of the Southern Asia Division hoped to develop a medical education program in Afghanistan. It was learned that there was a desire for visiting expatriate professionals to teach in the medical school.... At

that time, the School of Medicine asked me to come back to Loma Linda and substitute for Dr. [Carroll] Small, who was being sent to Vellore for two years.

"During the next two years, the Southern Asia Division secretary made contact with the medical school in Afghanistan, and I received an invitation from the Afghan government to come as a professor of pathology seconded by Loma Linda University."

Thus began a life-long journey that would take Dr. Hadley and family to Afghanistan five times—with his serving first as an educator and later, as a consultant for the World Health Organization (WHO), and eventually for the Afghan government.

During his first trip, in June of 1960, the medical school in Afghanistan asked that Dr. Hadley bring a histology technician with him.

"I knew of no one qualified who would agree to go off on such a venture," says Dr. Hadley, "so my wife consented to learn how to use a microtome and thereby cut and stain slides. We engaged a babysitter, and my wife worked in the laboratory at Loma Linda, and at the California Tissue Tumor Registry in Los Angeles. In six months she became very competent."

As a faculty member, Dr. Hadley taught general pathology to second-year students, and special pathology to third-year students.

The school operated on the French system, with students spending seven years in medical school, entering medicine in what would be their freshman year of college if they were in the educational system used in the United States. As one of his duties, Dr. Hadley was also asked to teach histology to the school's first-year (freshman) students.

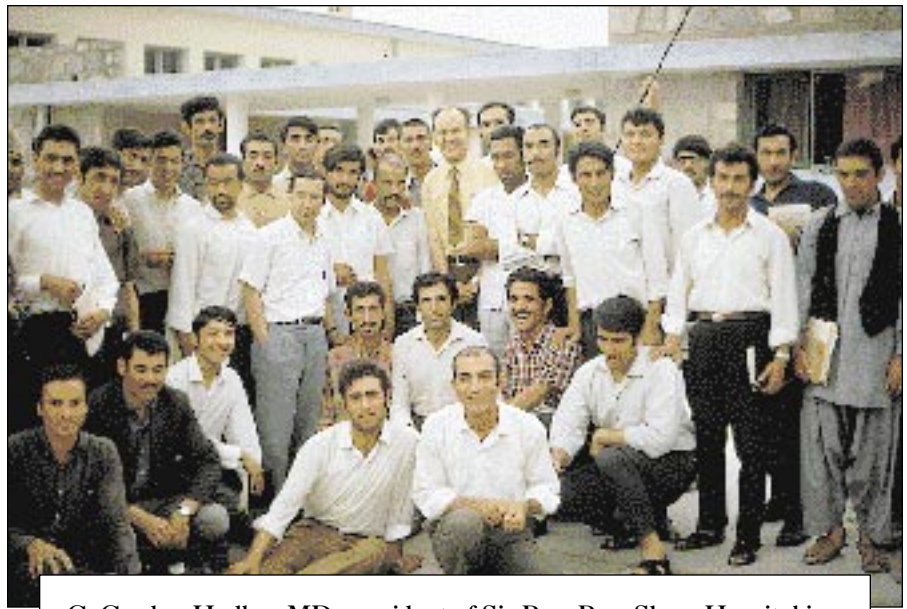
Dr. Hadley looks back on those days fondly. "The students were a great group who were anxious to learn," he says. "Teaching there was a wonderful experience."

After a one-year stay, he returned to the United States. In 1967, WHO asked Dr. Hadley to return to Afghanistan to continue his work. After receiving approval from LLU and the General Conference, Dr. Hadley arrived in Kabul in March. "We had a warm welcome," says Dr. Hadley. "The students and faculty had become very close to us."

Later in 1967, Dr. Hadley was asked by WHO to once again visit Afghanistan, this time as part of a visiting consulting team "largely related to a new medical school, Nangarhar Medical Faculty (NMF), the government had started in Jalalabad, 90 miles from Kabul," he says. "Three years later, in 1970, we were invited to take part in a joint effort with Indiana University to send professors to NMF."

Dr. Hadley requested permission, and "Again, the administration and Board of Loma Linda [University] granted me leave to do this," he notes. "A team of professionals went back in 1970.... Names well known in Loma Linda, such as Briggs, Centerwall, Crawford, Herndon, Jutzy, Peterson, Pitman, Rosenquist, and Tetz represent Loma Linda faculty who worked there during this period."

Contact with Afghanistan was temporarily halted as a result of the unrest there. "The events in Afghanistan since that time are disheartening," says Dr. Hadley. "The suffering of the people is almost unimaginable. Many



G. Gordon Hadley, MD, president of Sir Run Run Shaw Hospital in China, has traveled to Afghanistan five times. In one of his earlier trips, Dr. Hadley (wearing a tie) poses with third-year medical students whom he taught at Nangarhar Medical Faculty, a school of medicine in Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

have lost their lives, and the refugee population apparently exceeds anything that is known in history."

Recently, Dr. Hadley was contacted individually by the Afghan government and NMF administration, who noted Loma Linda's past interest and contributions to the medical school. Dr. Hadley was also asked to visit the region to observe the educational and health-care system, and to evaluate the needs of NMF and related institutions.

During a break from his duties in China, Dr. Hadley made his most recent trip to Afghanistan, arriving in Jalalabad on May 13, 1996.

"Dr. Ibrahim Seraj of our faculty, who himself is a refugee, and I were invited to Jalalabad to view the situation with the goal of assisting in rehabilitation of the medical school there," he says. "It was a most interesting trip, and coincided with a country-wide workshop of physicians and other delegates from different parts of the country, sponsored by the World Health Organization." Dr. Seraj is now serving as an associate professor of gynecology and obstetrics with Loma Linda University's School of Medicine.

Along with Drs. Hadley and Seraj, the group included Yousuf Sadiq, MD, a

representative of the Afghan Medical Association of America.

During their trip, the group visited various hospitals, schools, and the Hesar Shahi refugee camp, which houses 100,000 refugees from Kabul.

"During our trip," states Dr. Seraj, "we also met with numerous local and national officials. Each one gave us valuable input and pledged their support of our work."

"There are many challenges in this country, now trying to rebuild after years of war. Average life expectancy at birth is 45 years, and in the country's many refugee camps the people live under intolerable conditions, with women and children begging for food and clothing."

Loma Linda University's commitment to re-establishing ties and reaching out to Afghanistan is voiced by Joan Coggin, MD, MPH, special assistant to the president for international affairs.

"The Afghan government is working toward strengthening its health-care educational system, and improving conditions for the population," Dr. Coggin reports. "We are honored that they remembered Dr. Hadley's friendship and work years ago. I believe he planted the seed that is now being reaped." □