Fulbright Scholar Rida Iftikhar Wants to Make a Difference for the People of Pakistan

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After five years of medical training, Rida Iftikhar earned an MPhil in Histology and published a first-author paper (2016) while working as a surgical pathologist at the Army Medical College in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. However, she wanted to make a broader impact in her field by developing cost-efficient, scalable techniques for cancer diagnostics that could be accessible to outpatient facilities throughout Pakistan. Rida realized that she would need additional skills for such a project. She also knew about the Fulbright Scholarship program through friends who had been to the US on cultural exchange programs.

After preparing for and taking the GRE, Rida submitted a written application. Once passed the initial appraisal, she was selected for a personal interview and ultimately chosen as a Fulbright Scholar. The Institute of International Exchange helped Rida select five universities in the US that had PhD programs in her area of interest.

Rida ultimately chose Tulane Biomedical Sciences for her PhD studies. "I found Tulane Biomedical Sciences program to be very diverse", she reported. "I was mostly interested in cancer biology and Tulane had a lot of well-known researchers in the field of cancer. During the admission process, Tulane University was also very helpful and approachable."

Not surprisingly, Rida chose a faculty member in Tulane's Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine as her thesis mentor. She has now been in the program for more than 2 years, doing cancer research. "Currently, I am working on high fat diet-mediated colon cancer progression. My focus is to identify novel therapeutic targets and help in advancing treatment strategies in colon cancer and other lipid-associated disorders."

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