

Latifi, Rifat

Ministry of Health, Kosovo



Dr. Rifat Latifi was appointed Minister of Health of the Republic of Kosovo on November 16, 2021 by Prime Minister Albin Kurti. He is adjunct professor of surgery at the University of Arizona, and former Chairman and tenured Professor of Surgery at New York Medical College, School of Medicine and Director of the Department of Surgery at Westchester Medical Center Health Network in Valhalla, New York, and the Weill-Cornell Medicine, Doha, Qatar. In addition, he was Chief of General Surgery at Westchester Medical Center. He is fellow of the American College of Surgeons (ACS), International College of Surgeons (ICS), and of the Kosova College of Surgeons (KCS). He is a diplomate of the American Board of Surgery in general surgery and critical care. He is licensed both in New York and Arizona. Since 2018, Dr. Latifi has been the Founding President of the Kosova College of Surgeons, and, more recently, Editor-in-Chief of the Kosova Journal of Surgery. Dr. Latifi is the embodiment of the academic surgeon, surgical mentor, avid researcher, and surgical educator with international and global interest, who was promoted to full professor of surgery only five years after he finished his Surgery Residency at Yale University in 1999. He has broad and comprehensive clinical and research interests, including re-operative surgery, complex trauma and general surgery, surgical critical care, surgical decision-making and geriatric surgery, telemedicine, and nutrition support of surgery and critically-ill patients. He was Director of the Department of Surgery at Westchester Medical Center Health Network in Valhalla, New York, from 2016 to November 2021, and was responsible for major reforms and rebuilding the department of surgery into an outstanding academic and internationally renowned clinical and research department. Dr. Latifi received his "Doctor of Medicine" Degree from the University of Prishtina, Medical Faculty in Prishtina, Kosovo. He served as an intern at the University of Prishtina and the Cleveland Clinic Foundation in Ohio. He completed his residency in General Surgery at the Yale University School of Medicine and Surgical Critical Care Fellowship at Lincoln Hospital, New York Medical College. He is the author/co-author of more than 330 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters. In addition, he has authored/edited 20 books and serves on the editorial boards of many international surgical peer-review journals. He is member of a number of multiple state, national, and international

surgical organizations, including the American Surgical Association, the most prestigious surgical society in the world. Dr Latifi is a recognized authority in telemedicine and telehealth. He is passionately dedicated to global surgery and international telemedicine as tools of rebuilding healthcare systems in the developing world and post-conflict countries. He has created three national telemedicine programs in Europe (Kosova and Albania) and Africa (Cabo Verde) for which he has received the “2015 American College of Surgeons (ACS)/Pfizer International Surgical Volunteerism award.” Furthermore, Dr. Latifi has established the first teletrauma and telepresence program in Arizona, the Southern Arizona Telemedicine and Telepresence (SATT), which served residents along the U.S.-Mexico border. Dr. Latifi has also received “The 21st Century Achievement Award for Health” from the Computerworld Honors Program and the “International Award for Health Promotion” from the Utilization Review Accreditation Commission (URAC). In 2017, he was awarded the Westchester County Doctors of Distinction “No Land Too Far Award” by the Westchester Business Journal in Westchester, New York, and Top Doctors in 2020 and 2021. In addition, he was awarded the “Certificate of Appreciation” by NATO HQ, Brussels, for Dedication and Excellent Work for the Multinational Telemedicine System. He has participated as volunteer surgeon in the Philippines since 2006 and serves on ACS Committee on Global Engagement. Currently, serves as Vice-president at the International College of Surgeons, US Chapter, and delegate from the State of New York. Within the celebrations of the Albanian Heritage Month, the “Westchester County Board of Legislators” declared November 13, 2021, as the “Dr. Rifat Latifi Day” to honor Rifat Latifi, M.D., FACS, FICS, FKCS, and his commitment to the health and well-being of the people of Westchester County and the world, meanwhile overseeing national telemedicine programs in his native Kosovo, Albania, as well as, Cabo Verde, Africa. In addition to his surgical skills, he was recognized for his efforts in helping to establish trauma and telehealth systems in rural areas and underdeveloped countries.

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Within the Albanian community around the world, as well as in the telemedicine community worldwide, Dr. Latifi is recognized as one of the authorities in telemedicine and telehealth. Moreover, he is passionately dedicated to global surgery and international telemedicine as tools of rebuilding healthcare systems in the developing world and post-conflict countries. He established the first teletrauma and telepresence program in Arizona, the Southern Arizona Telemedicine and Telepresence (SATT), which serves residents along the U.S.-Mexico border. He has created three national telemedicine programs in Europe (Kosova and Albania) and Africa (Cabo Verde), for which he has received the 2015 American College of Surgeons (ACS)/Pfizer International Surgical Volunteerism award. Furthermore, Dr. Latifi has also received “The 21st Century Achievement Award for Health” from the Computerworld Honors Program and the “International Award for Health Promotion” from the Utilization Review Accreditation Commission (URAC). In 2017, he was awarded the Westchester County Doctors of Distinction “No Land Too Far Award” by the Westchester Business Journal in Westchester, New York, and Top Doctors in 2020. In addition, he was awarded the Certificate of Appreciation by NATO HQ, Brussels for his Dedication and Excellent Work for the Multinational Telemedicine System. He has participated as a volunteer surgeon in the Philippines since 2006, and serves on the American College of Surgeons Committee on Global Engagement, as well as serving as Vice-president of the International College of Surgeons, US Chapter.