Professor discusses latest learning theories at Grand Rounds

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The use of reflection as a tool in medical education and practice was explored in the latest installment of WCMC-Q’s Grand Rounds.

Dr. Stella Major, the college’s associate professor of clinical medicine, gave an in-depth explanation of the value of taking time to reflect upon and appraise new material and skills that have been learned, and explored how these processes have been incorporated into medical education and practice.

In addition to her teaching role at WCMC-Q, Dr. Major practices as a family physician in Qatar and London, and is a Fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners in the United Kingdom.

Speaking before an audience of fellow physicians, researchers, students and healthcare professionals at WCMC-Q, Dr. Major said: “Reflective learning is an incredibly useful tool for physicians, educators and students, and by incorporating it into our working lives we can become more skillful at the tasks we perform and more effective as learners and teachers. The value of looking back at our learning experiences should not be underestimated; it gives us an opportunity to reflect on what went well, what went badly and why.

“Reflective learning can tell us how we learn, as distinct from learning simply being about taking information on board. Understanding how learning happens helps us to become critical thinkers and lifelong learners, which is a crucial attribute for physicians.”

Dr. Major has experience as a clinical practitioner and instructor spanning a period of 20 years, and held positions at the United Arab Emirates University, the American University of Beirut, and Imperial College, London, where she still holds the post of honorary senior lecturer.

Dr. Major added: “If we go into a learning experience knowing that we are going to evaluate it reflectively afterwards, we are likely to have a more effective learning experience. Reflective learning also encourages us to prepare for learning experiences by deciding beforehand on a theory or a perception that we wish to test. These measures make learning experiences far more fruitful.”

Dr. Dora Stadler, assistant dean for Continuing Professional Development and assistant professor of medicine at WCMC-Q, said: “Dr. Major has a wealth of experience both as a clinician and an educator, and is an enthusiastic advocate of reflective learning techniques. By passing on these techniques she has ensured that her students are equipped to continue to grow and develop their skills and knowledge effectively once they have left her care. As such, we are very happy to be able to share Dr. Major’s thoughts on reflective education for the benefit of the medical community in Qatar at Grand Rounds.”