Dr. Hanan Al-Kuwari on the Future of Health Care in Qatar
HIGHLIGHTS

Sea Lavender as photographed by Dr. Renee Richer

The Desert Life
Dr. Renee Richer talks about her work which won her the National Photography Competition in Qatar
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English Teachers Present at TESOL

WCMC-Q faculty members, Assistant Professor in Pre-Med English Dr. Alan Weber, Senior Lecturer of Pre-Medical Education Dr. Krystyna Golkowska, and Dr. Rachid Bendriss, Lecturer of English in Pre-Medical Education, presented at the Qatar National Convention Centre where the inaugural Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Association’s Putting Research into Practice conference got underway in October.

There were over 60 presentations by speakers from 20 countries around the world, many of the pre-conference workshops addressed topics such as teaching writing, vocabulary development, reading, and English for specific purposes.

“English is being increasingly recognized as an international language for science, technology and business. It is also the dominant language of the Internet because the world-wide web originally grew out of a system of American military networked computers (ARPANET). The TESOL organization, the largest and most influential international organization for the teaching of English to other language speakers, is committed to high standards of English language teaching throughout the world, while recognizing that native languages must also be promoted, particularly in the Arabian Gulf,” Dr. Weber said.

Dr. Golkowska and Dr. Bendriss gave two presentations, one on Qatari students’ college readiness and another on the results of their study on the reading habits of Qatari students.

The world of medical science is constantly evolving and new technology has often been used to help refine medical education systems. Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) is a pioneer in the use of cutting-edge technology and uses the latest innovations to support learning.

Recently WCMC-Q’s Distributed eLibrary (DeLib) launched the Mobile Resources workshop, which taught those who attended how to effectively use medical applications for mobile devices including the iPad, iPhone, and iPod Touch. The session complemented the incorporation of iPad tablets into the learning model at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York and Qatar.

The workshop attracted students, research staff and faculty. It was organized by Ellen Sayed, Director of DeLib, and Sa’ad Laws, Information Services Librarian. “This is something important that has a place. It has a context for students and faculty,” said Sayed. Workshop attendees welcomed the new technology. Some of the medical applications used included Medscape, a pharmaceutical and medical reference guide, and the Qx Calculator, which is a calculator for medical-related formulas.

“All of the participants were engaged in using their iPad, iPhone, or iPod in the particular endeavors. I believe that this workshop gave them the chance to see some of the resources that are available to assist them,” said Laws, who taught the workshop.

The Distributed eLibrary at WCMC-Q comprises of high-quality resources and additionally, librarians are available to assist DeLib users to search a variety of information.
WCMC-Q Donates Medical Textbooks to Developing Countries

A large number of medical textbooks have been donated to universities in developing countries by WCMC-Q. The School of Medicine at the University of Nairobi in Kenya and Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia benefited from the generous donations that were facilitated by staff, faculty and students from WCMC-Q.

The Kenyan Ambassador to Qatar, His Excellency Galma Mukhe Boru, visited WCMC-Q campus to express gratitude for the books and was greeted by Dr. Mohamud Verjee, Assistant Professor of Family Medicine at WCMC-Q.

Ambassador Boru said he was very pleased by the efforts of Dr. Verjee in organizing the donation and he hoped that the academic bridge building would continue between the two institutions. He said, “These books will go a long way in helping the Kenyan students in the university because many of them do not have access to e-libraries and therefore struggle to share the few copies in the Kenyan universities.”

Dr. Verjee said he was hoping to make further donations of unused textbooks to schools or universities where he expects they will be a welcome addition to limited resources. He said, “A further two batches are being prepared for similar distribution to Kenya of approximately 100 books each. In addition, 67 science books were delivered to the DeBakey High School in Doha, after a recent community school and information visit.”

Also, over 1500 medical textbooks were sent to a university in Indonesia through collaboration with Reach Out To Asia (ROTA) organization. Assistant Dean for Administration, Susan Lacey, liaised with ROTA to source a suitable Indonesian university and the textbooks from the library, faculty and students were sent to Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Ms. Lacey said, “I discussed the book donation with the library staff because we had a lot of books that were no longer needed by our students. I suggested that, as part of the WCMC-Q outreach program, it would help to give the books to an organization that assists Asian countries.”

Students and faculty also worked with Noha Saleh, the Director of Student Recruitment at WCMC-Q, to package together a number of titles that were made available to the DeBakey High School in Doha.

Dr. Verjee also coordinated this donation that included a number of reference textbooks from his private collection.

Dr. Verjee said, “Six full boxes of screened and educationally relevant books were gathered together by me, including part of my personal collection, more use to young students than myself now. Not only is education by reading manifestly important, but I have striven to ensure that surplus and useful books are passed on to reach areas of need, rather than being wasted. It’s a form of recycling of educational resources of knowledge.”
Dr. Hanan Al-Kuwari sits at the head of a medical corporation that takes in seven major hospitals, all of which have been short-listed for excellence awards, as well as a national Ambulance Service and state-of-the-art research facilities which in 2011 saw the corporation receive nearly QR40 million in Qatar National Research Fund grants.

She is also a board member of the most high profile medical executives and committees in Doha. As Managing Director of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) her meteoric rise through the ranks of the medical elite puts paid to the notion that women do not succeed in the workplace in the Middle East.

HMC continues to grow exponentially and with it the responsibility of overseeing all the operations and strategic direction sits squarely on the shoulders of Dr. Al-Kuwari. “We have achieved so much but there is more to do. In Qatar we have a double burden of disease. That is we suffer from diseases of the modern world and diseases of the developing world. We have modern disease like cardiovascular disease and diabetes in particular. But we are also dealing with infectious diseases such as TB, and we have an excellent screening program in order to capture the infection.”

Dr. Al-Kuwari is well aware of the opportunity such screening programs present to students and faculty at WCMC-Q. She says, “We are building a new infectious diseases center in partnership with Qatar Foundation and the Supreme Council of Health. There we are collaborating with the Institut Pasteur to utilize the latest research around TB and other infectious diseases. This will afford Weill Cornell students an opportunity to collaborate with us on the very latest work being done in that area. It means the students will have the opportunity to
According to Dr. Al-Kuwari, the ultimate aim of HMC is to develop a healthy population and WCMC-Q is part of the equation in making that happen through its partnership with HMC. She says, “We are working together to introduce technologies in evidence-based medicine that will improve the quality of health of the population. We are working collaboratively on four research areas with WCMC-Q which are: cancer care, cardiovascular diseases, metabolic disorders and the fourth is neurosciences. These are the four main concerns of our population. We have a high incidence of diabetes in our population for multiple reasons and a high incidence of road traffic accidents, which result in a large number of brain injuries.”

She points out that the strong collaboration between WCMC-Q and HMC started with the purpose of ensuring that the medical students who graduate out of Weill Cornell have an environment that will continue to foster high quality education for them. “It is also fostered around the fact that, as the health care provider, we seek to develop a sustainable high quality medical workforce. The presence of WCMC-Q is a key factor in developing a high caliber medical cadre.

“Over the summer we launched an initiative to transform Hamad and its partners into an academic health system. WCMC-Q is our main partner in that initiative and plays an important role in achieving the objective that we, as an academic partnership, have in realizing the national priorities set out by the Supreme Council of Health,” she said.

With her passion for transforming health care and introducing innovative change transformation initiatives, Dr. Al-Kuwari is ideal for overseeing the project. This newest initiative is one of many she has introduced over the years. Dr. Al-Kuwari previously established a center for health care improvement, dedicated to continuously innovating and driving business process re-engineering across HMC. Through these changes and initiatives HMC has now become a learning organization that recognizes and rewards innovation and high performance.

During 2010 a total of 125 students from first to fourth year received their clinical training at HMC. Dr. Al-Kuwari says that the vision is to become a true academic health care system that supports the pursuit of new discoveries through research that can be put to practical application and improve patient outcomes. Students at WCMC-Q are exposed to patients and clinical training from day one. This year first-year medical students got an opportunity to learn about emergency medicine and treating trauma patients at HMC. Furthermore, students do their internships and residencies alongside some of the best trained medical professionals in the region at HMC.

Dr. Al-Kuwari believes that the future of medical care in Qatar is bright. She says, “All those who enter medicine are individuals who have a giving nature and a passion for improving people’s lives. These are qualities of future leaders, in that sense those who enter medicine in Qatar have a very promising career and the potential of enjoying a rewarding career path in every sense, spiritually, financially and socially. The health care system is growing in Doha and there will be a lot of important clinical leadership roles that the new generation coming on board will be filling, therefore we can be confident of attracting young people into a career in medicine in Qatar.

“The role that WCMC-Q plays in that is vital, because it is developing our future medical capacity and our future medical talent and we are very proud of the graduates of Weill Cornell. They have proved themselves to be very hard-working and very diligent. They are dedicated and they are more than 100 percent committed to the work. It is a pleasure and a joy to see such caliber of young future talent. A lot of them have been placed in the best institutions as part of their residency and we look forward to them coming back to Doha and playing a significant role in our health care industry as a whole.”

“There is now enough evidence to show that health care systems that focus equally on care, education and research are safer and provide better health care for the population. That is the motivation behind developing the academic health care partnership that we are working very closely with Weill Cornell on, in a cycle of education and research, because when we deliver that, we will be providing the population with high quality medical care. Our ambition is to be the leading health care provider and system in the region,” she said.  

by Sarah Spendiff
The second edition of Between Seminar Rooms has been launched at WCMC-Q. The creative writing and visual arts journal, created exclusively by medical and pre-medical students at WCMC-Q, features poems, photos and short stories. Edited by Autumn Watts, English lecturer and Writing Center Coordinator, the volume gives students an opportunity to express their creativity and see their work in print.

Speaking at the launch Watts said, “Why do we produce a book of creative work by medical students, why is art important to them? The answer is because our students are many things. They are incredibly bright, they are high achievers, they are driven and they are smart. But medical students are also creative, they spill outside the boundaries of themselves and create art.”

During the book launch at WCMC-Q, 14 students presented their work in a presentation to last no more than two minutes, or face being chased off the stage. Some read out their work to the audience whilst those who created images spoke about their inspiration and methodology in creating them. If any ran over their two-minute slot they were squawked off the stage by an inflatable chicken brandished at them by Watts.

Students also took part in a competition to write funny captions and to produce the funniest Facebook status. Competition winners were announced at the launch with their entries being published in the book. Rana El Maghraby, who won the Facebook status competition with her entry, ‘Who said nothing was impossible, I have been doing nothing for the past hour’, said she enjoys writing for the purpose of unleashing her emotions and her thoughts.

Among the many talented contributors is Abdulhadi Al-Saei who produced the cover design, as well as many photographs inside. Abdulhadi purchased his first camera over a decade ago and is now a passionate photographer. He is president of both the WCMC-Q and the Education City Photography Club. He says that almost all elements in this universe have a beautiful core that can make a gorgeous photo.

Watts says, "I’m incredibly proud of what these students have created. There are sketches, photos, paintings and prose of a very high standard in this, our second edition of Between Seminar Rooms, and the feedback about it has been very positive.”

A reception followed the book launch and copies of the book were given to those present, complete with secreted ‘sticky notes’ inside with cryptic messages to add an interactive element to the creative journal.
Global Health Club Reaches Out to Migrant Workforce

WCMC-Q’s finest students have set up the Global Health Club (GHC) with a remit to raise awareness among students of global health issues and to promote participation in health care programs aimed at delivering solutions, reflecting the pioneering spirit of Qatar and the philanthropic aspirations of WCMC-Q and the Qatar Foundation.

Marwa Saleh, left, and Maryam Ayaz both third-year medical students and members of the Global Health Club at WCMC-Q

Two patients at the TB clinic play chess on a board donated by the GHC
Modest, diminutive and clearly very bright, Marwa Saleh, a third-year med student, is keen to emphasize she has been helped in this endeavor by others in WCMC-Q who share her concerns. “It’s important to understand that it’s not me alone doing this. Others in the class have been very involved and so have the faculty and other staff members at WCMC-Q, it’s a team effort.”

Among the ‘others’ Saleh is referring to are Rahima Sanya and Maryam Ayaz, also third-year med students, who have been instrumental in organizing meals for migrant workers, handing out food and clothes in impoverished areas and visiting the children’s ward in hospitals to hand out games and toys.

Global health is ultimately about ensuring that people around the world have equal access and availability of quality health care.

“The faculty here have been very generous. We have literally knocked on office doors and asked for support for these events and they have always obliged,” says Saleh. The students have also received a great deal of support and guidance from Dr. Sohaila Cheema, Manager of Global and Public Health.

The Global Health Club (GHC) was created with the support of Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, Associate Dean for Global and Public Health. It was based on the Student Volunteer Group (SVG) set up in 2008 by Saleh and other students with an aim to create a database of opportunities for students to get involved with charity drives and generally lend a hand.

This was well received among the students who wanted to do more to help others and they could see the benefits of extra curriculum activities, explains Saleh. “We worked with breast cancer awareness campaigns and raised funds for the Think Pink Qatar organization that first year.”

The group also got involved in an area of health that mostly affects poorer members of the population, TB. With the support of a Qatar National Research Fund Undergraduate Research Experience Program (UREP) grant and in conjunction with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) the students began a study to ascertain how long migrant workers with the disease go undetected and to document their experience of living with it.

“The point is to survey the wider community of migrant workers to identify factors which might delay them seeking treatment. This can be for cultural reasons and also because they may not understand the disease itself,” says Saleh.

Apart from the collaborative research project, members of the GHC are involved in a social outreach capacity with patients at HMC’s TB clinic, bringing some light relief in the form of games and activities and also to educate them about the risks of TB so that they may also educate others in their community.

Another important aim of the GHC is to educate as many students as possible on critical global health issues. They have organized a series of lectures on subjects as diverse as medical conditions in Haiti, fistula repair in Ethiopia and the impact of the floods in Pakistan on health care.

These successful seminars have been held in collaboration with leading physicians such as Dr. Arash Tabrizi, Assistant Professor of Genetic Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynecology at WCMC-Q, Dr. Estomih Mtui, Associate Professor of Anatomy in Cell and Developmental Biology at WCMC-NY as well as high profile organizations such as Qatar Red Crescent.

“Going forward the GHC intends to grow these lectures to ensure more students are able to attend and to spread the message that as medical students we have a duty of care to ensure global health issues are addressed,” Saleh said.

Other initiatives include working collaboratively with other health care providers to run health clinics for migrant workers and fundraising events with Qatar Red Crescent for their emergency efforts worldwide. “We also plan to organize events to highlight international health days such as Women’s Day, AIDS and World Mental Health Day,” said Saleh.

“Global health is ultimately about ensuring that people around the world have equal access and availability of quality health care regardless of their social and economic status. We are glad that our students are participating in this process,” said Dr. Mamtani.
Researchers Uncover New Findings in HIV/AIDS Epidemic
In the first study of its kind in the region, researchers at WCMC-Q have found emerging HIV/AIDS epidemics among specific population groups who engage in high-risk sexual behavior or intravenous drug use.

Dr. Laith Abu-Raddad, Assistant Professor of Public Health, and Senior Epidemiologist, Ghina Mumtaz, found very limited evidence of the disease being transmitted in the general population but discovered concentrated HIV epidemics in these high-risk groups.

The study was published in August in the Public Library of Science, (PLoS Medicine), a prestigious medical journal. It is the first study on HIV/AIDS from the MENA region to be published in a high-impact, leading journal. The findings of the study received broad interest in the HIV scientific community and attracted wide media coverage by the main international news outlets such as Reuters, BBC, National Public Radio (NPR), Bloomberg, The New York Times, Science, Nature and many others.

Dr. Abu-Raddad said, “We were humbled by the impact and coverage of this study. This achievement testifies to the progress of our research program at WCMC-Q to produce scientific findings that are putting the research in Qatar in the spotlight of the scientific community.” Mumtaz and Dr. Abu-Raddad discovered epidemics emerging among men who have sex with men (MSM) a term that encompasses gay men, bi-sexual and transgendered. Injecting drug users were also a key group at risk of HIV infection.

Mumtaz and Dr. Abu-Raddad, of the Infectious Disease Epidemiology Group at WCMC-Q, presented their findings at the 19th Biennial Meeting of the International Society for Sexually Transmitted Diseases Research in Quebec in July. The conference brings together leading researchers and clinicians from around the world to present their findings on the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and HIV under the theme, From Research to Intervention: Successes and Challenges.

“The findings of our study are based on an analysis and synthesis of hundreds of data sources, contrary to the common perception that there are little or no factual data on HIV/AIDS in the region,” said Mumtaz, main author of the study who joined WCMC-Q two years ago from the American University of Beirut to work on HIV research in the Middle East and North Africa. “When we gathered and analyzed all the data, it became clear that HIV epidemics among MSM were just starting to emerge in the region. The levels of HIV infection however are still lower than those in other regions.”

The study reports that rates of HIV infection among MSM vary across the region, but have already exceeded 5 percent, the threshold defining concentrated epidemics, in several countries. In one setting it has even reached 28 percent.

“What is also worrying is that we found high levels of risky practices, which will likely expose this population to further HIV spread in the coming years,” said Dr. Abu-Raddad. The researchers also found that there is substantial overlap between MSM and other population groups with risk of HIV transmission. For example, up to 35 percent of MSM in MENA are married and up to 53 percent inject drugs. “Such overlap is worrying because it allows the virus to be transmitted from one population group to the other.”

One example of the kind of emerging HIV epidemics that are observed in the region is that of Pakistan. Since the early 2000s, Pakistan had an HIV epidemic among injecting drug users (IDUs) with rates of HIV infection growing steadily to reach 20.8 percent in 2008. Around 2005, HIV infections started also to be observed among MSM. By 2008, the HIV epidemic among MSM was already concentrated with a rate of 6.4 percent. “Pakistan is an example of the pattern we see in the region. HIV epidemics started to emerge only in the last few years. The epidemic started among IDUs and then it moved to MSM,” explained Mumtaz.

Public health authorities in several countries of the region have started confronting the epidemic with national programs, indicated Dr. Abu-Raddad. “There is, however, a lack of comprehensive knowledge among high-risk groups about how to prevent HIV infection. The problem is further compounded by poor access to HIV services. More testing and access to HIV services would help limit the size of the epidemics and prevent HIV transmission from reaching other population groups,” said Dr. Abu-Raddad.

Mumtaz stressed the need for countries in the region to expand HIV surveillance to monitor HIV infection levels and detect such emerging epidemics in their early stages. She added, “Our research highlights the need for stakeholders to act now in order to prevent further spread of the infection.”
The applicability of personalized medicine has moved one step closer thanks to a research study undertaken by WCMC-Q’s new Professor of Physiology and Biophysics, Karsten Suhre, Ph.D. In the most comprehensive investigation of its kind, the genetic variance in human metabolism was analysed and new insights into a range of common diseases were discovered.

The study, recently published in the prestigious journal ‘Nature’ and titled, ‘Human metabolic individuality in biomedical and pharmaceutical research’, establishes metabolomics as an intermediate to providing a biological link that contributes to the understanding of the genetic effects and more effectively impacts discovery and development of individualized biomarkers and therapies.

Professor Suhre led the study, which was a collaboration between European research centers, prior to taking up his position as Director of the Bioinformatics Core at WCMC-Q. Professor Suhre said, “This study suggests that testing biochemical levels, not withstanding inborn errors of metabolism, is an excellent way of understanding individual uniqueness and can potentially increase the development of personalized medicine.”

The research project searched for genetic influences on levels of more than 250 compounds in blood, including lipids, sugars, vitamins, amino acids and others. They discovered variants that have a significant effect on the levels of these compounds, and therefore on the underlying biological and disease processes. The findings provide new insights for many disease-related associations that have been reported in previous studies, including cardiovascular and kidney disorders, type 2 diabetes, cancer, gout, thrombosis and Crohn’s disease.

“Often the effects of variants discovered in genome-wide association analyses are modest and we then have a poor understanding of the biological mechanisms behind the associations. However, this approach can overcome these problems and possibly inform individualized therapy or treatment. Previous studies have focused on the levels of one or a few metabolites such as cholesterol levels or sugar in the blood, these are investigated by a general practitioner to help diagnose disease. The new approach in this work analyzed a much wider range of small biochemical compounds, to give as complete a picture as possible of the molecules that are symptoms of disease and those that might contribute to disease,” said Professor Suhre. “These remarkable findings enable researchers to identify new and potentially relevant metabolic processes and pathways. We have, therefore, identified new molecules of interest that could be clinically significant.”

Professor Suhre is excited to be part of the visionary and dedicated team of researchers at WCMC-Q and is looking forward to participating in the drive to alleviate the health issues that are impacting on the region such as diabetes and heart disease.
Clinical evaluation of medical students is an essential part of their overall grade. In medicine clerkship 33 percent of the grade comes from evaluation forms filled out by our faculty at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC).

“Since taking over the clerkship, evaluation and grade has been my biggest challenge. This is not unique to Qatar, it is a global issue and one that receives attention in medical education worldwide,” said Dr. Mai Mahmoud, Assistant Professor of Medicine at WCMC-Q.

A minor additional factor here is the diversely trained faculty, some of which are unfamiliar with the North American clerkship system and the ongoing evaluation. As a course director, Dr. Mahmoud looks for meaningful, formative and summative feedback, which is helpful not only for the grade but also for student progress as they advance their learning.

With this in mind, Dr. Mahmoud took the challenge to Harvard Macy Institute for Professional Development. There she learnt about the RIME (Reporter-Interpreter-Manager-Educator) framework from Louis Pangaro, M.D., MACP.

She says, “I was very impressed by this and started to adopt it in medicine clerkship for many reasons. For example, I found it simple to understand and it is standardized. It gives consistency, fairness and as Dr. Pangaro says, it ensures faculty are all playing from the same sheet of music. It illustrates the progress and development of a learner and it has been practiced for many years in the US.”

Dr. Mahmoud and Dr. Dora Stadler, Assistant Professor of Medicine, are now co-directors for medicine clerkship and both are working on the RIME project. They do the formal evaluation session at mid-clerkship for formative feedback and also at the end for summative evaluation.

A summary of their work was presented at the Association of Medical Education in Europe (AMEE) conference in August. The AMEE annual conference in Vienna attracted more than 1800 delegates and is among the key international meetings for those involved in medical education. The conference considers a wide range of topical issues in medical and health care professions education.

The presentation was well received and there are plans to present again at next year’s conference scheduled for Lyon, in France. Dr. Stadler said, “Overall, RIME has been a work intensive but extremely successful way of gaining meaningful evaluation for our students. In addition, our affiliate faculty members have become excellent at giving detailed feedback and even the junior residents are getting this experience as they are asked to give feedback and then listen to the feedback provided by the seniors on their team. Therefore, our hope is that the reach of this project will go beyond the students, since giving timely feedback is a challenge at every step of training.”

Dr. Dora Stadler and Dr. Mai Mahmoud adopted the RIME framework to help in the clinical evaluations of WCMC-Q medical students.
Dr. Renee Richer wins photography competition

Dr. Renee Richer, Assistant Professor in Biology at Weill Cornell Medical College-Qatar, won the top prize in a national photography competition organized by the Qatar Ministry of Environment. The competition highlighted Qatari natural landmarks and was of particular interest to Dr. Richer who has made conservation study, sustainable development and desert wildlife her mission in life.

The Ministry of Environment announced the photography competition in March as part of the Qatar Environment Day program, under the banner of Sport and Environment. The intention was that the photographs should capture the country’s environment and highlight its rich, natural landmarks through the creative use of photography.

His Excellency Abdullah bin Mubarak Bin Abud Al-Medadi, Minister of the Environment, and His Excellency Dr. Sheikh Faleh Bin Nasser Al Thani, Director of General Department for Agricultural Research and Development, presided over the award ceremony held at Katara Cultural District where the winner’s photographs formed part of an exhibition. Dr. Sheikh Faleh bin Nasser Al Thani highlighted the importance of photography and presented Certificates of Appreciation to the winners.

“As I’m so happy that the Ministry of Environment and the judges felt that my photo expressed the beauty of Qatar. That is always what I wanted. While I never expected to win, I was hoping my photos would reach people. My wish is that the photos inspire others to explore the desert and begin to see and appreciate the stunning plants and animals of the desert. Superficially the desert may seem harsh and barren, but if you begin to really look around you, the plants, larger animals and insects are so beautiful. It is a biologist’s dream,” Dr. Richer said.

As an ecologist, Dr. Richer spends much of her time in the desert and has the opportunity to see many hidden and isolated areas of Qatar where most people do not have the chance to venture. “My specialty is plants and in particular, macro photos of plants. I focus on capturing their unique aspects, other identifiable features, or just plain beautiful photos of seeds, flowers or leaves to write a flora of Qatar. It was something I did for myself. However, now I hope to work more on composition in the future and this win has really inspired me to become even more diligent in my photography,” she said.

Dr. Richer is no stranger to winning awards. During her tenure as Assistant Professor and Director of the Environmental Conservation and Research Center at the American University of Armenia she received the Whitley Award, a prestigious UK conservation accolade. She has previously published work in peer-reviewed journals and contributed chapters on conservation and sustainability for a range of titles.

According to Dr. Richer, there are nearly 400 plant species in Qatar, each unique in its habits, character, medicinal properties and religious significance. Each has a story to tell, she said. “I have devoted the last four and a half years of my life to better understanding the desert and discovering the beauty of Qatar. It was important for me to participate as I felt I had something to offer.”
Renee’s winning photograph of the fruit of Savignya Parviflora which are found in Qatar and the Gulf region as well as the desert areas of North Africa and Asia.

*Scrophularia desertii*  
*A desert Geranium*  
*A Blue Headed Agama relaxes on a Zygophyllum Qatarense plant*
The King’s Speech Oscar Winner and Cornell Alumnus DAVID SEIDLER Offers Advice to WCMC-Q Students

One piece of advice Oscar winner and Cornell NY graduate would pass on to students of WCMC-Q is, “Never give up on your dreams”.
At 73 and being the oldest recipient of an Oscar for best original screenplay, Seidler is well placed to give such advice. There was much hilarity when, at the Academy Awards ceremony, Seidler, who won for the script, The King’s Speech commented, “My father always said I’d be a late bloomer.”

Graduating from the class of ’59 with contemporaries such as writers Kirkpatrick Sale, Richard Farina and Thomas Pynchon, author of Gravity’s Rainbow and The Crying of Lot, Seidler was always in good company with talented writers. He attended high school with Francis Ford Coppola and it was through this connection Seidler received his first big break. He explains, “I was working in New Zealand in advertising which I disliked. I was approaching 40 and I decided to give writing one last shot. I had always wanted to make a living as a writer and so I decided to go to Hollywood and give it all I could.”

In the mid 1980s Seidler had an idea for a film about Preston Tucker, based on a true story of an American man’s dream to build the best cars in the world. He wrote the script and in 1988 Coppola directed the movie, which won a string of awards including a BAFTA, Golden Globe, and three Academy Award nominations. Other successes followed including the Emmy Award winning Onassis: The Richest Man in the World, which also bagged Seidler a Writers Guild of America award.

However, none matched the run away success of The King’s Speech, starring Colin Firth and Helena Bonham-Carter, about the struggles of England’s King George VI to master his speech impediment. Inspired, in part, by Seidler’s own challenges with a childhood stutter, he had the idea on hold for many years as he was asked by the Queen Mother, Elizabeth and the wife of King George VI, to not produce the story in her lifetime, so deep were the scars left behind by her beloved husband’s stutter.

Seidler’s own speech problems had all but disappeared by the time he reached Cornell in 1955. He says what he loved the most about the university in those days was its sheer size. “If you wanted to you could be completely anonymous there as it was so vast and I liked that.”

Seidler had originally intended to study Genetics with a view to becoming a Botanist but his love of English literature and writing won him over. Cornell has a rich history in producing world-class writers and has also attracted some of the most established names in literature.

Vladimir Nabokov, author of Lolita, taught at Cornell during the ‘50s and James McConkey, author of the novels Crossroads and A Journey to Sahalin, was also a mentor to Seidler. “As a result I majored in English and also took up playwriting in the drama department,” he says. “Despite being concerned that I might never earn a living as a writer.” But with other inspirational writers around at the time like Baxter Hathaway, who founded the renowned literary magazine Epoch, he felt he had to give it a try.

These were clearly halcyon days for Seidler who became a well-known figure around the campus. So much so that when the legendary riots broke out on campus in May 1958 over the treatment of co-eds he was asked by a senior staff member, Proctor George, to help calm the situation. He attempted to do so but the scenario backfired and Seidler came very close to being wrongly expelled for inciting the disorder.

This incident, among others, the writer recounts with some amusement in his rich baritone voice. Had he not made it as a writer, Seidler undoubtedly would have made it as a voiceover artist, with the deep, dramatic tones often heard introducing the latest blockbusters. A natural storyteller, there is always a fascinating history behind each subject we discuss.

His latest project takes us to the Middle East with a screenplay about Lady Hester Stanhope, an 18th Century noblewoman and niece of William Pitt the Younger, the youngest ever UK Prime Minister. Based on a biography by Kristen Ellis, Seidler’s screen adaptation is a sweeping biopic that takes in great swathes of the region from Damascus to Mecca. “Hester was a remarkable woman, ahead of her time,” says Seidler. “She ran Pitt’s household during his tenure at 10 Downing Street and, unusually for women in those days, sat in on many Cabinet meetings.”

Bold, headstrong and ambitious, Lady Stanhope traveled to the Middle East in order to broker good relationships between the UK and the region, according to Ellis’s book. She was welcomed by the leaders of the day, despite shirking conventional dress codes and instead adopting men’s dress including embroidered trousers, waistcoat and saber. Local Bedouin leaders were reportedly impressed by her and she also met with governors, Pashas and other key figures from all over the area.

“I’m inspired by stories about real people,” says Seidler. “Hester was quite a remarkable woman, she completely embraced Arabs and the Arabic way of life and that was quite unique for a British noblewoman in those days. She was the ‘Lady of Arabia’ a hundred years before we had ‘Lawrence of Arabia’.” She finally settled in a monastery on the Mediterranean coast in an area that is now Lebanon and gave shelter to fleeing refugees of the inter-clan wars until her death in 1839.

The project is due to start filming later this year and is scheduled for release in Qatar and the region by the end of 2012. Despite his current success and arriving at what some might call retirement age, Seidler has no plans to slow down with many high profile projects in development. He is walking proof that it is never too late to live your dreams. “Whatever it is you want to achieve, follow your heart,” he says.  

by Sarah Spendiff
In the first study of its kind in Qatar, researchers at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) examined the impact of speed cameras on motor vehicle accidents and found a dramatic decrease in fatal motor vehicle injuries is the result. Most speed cameras were installed during 2007, giving researchers the opportunity to examine injury rates before and after the use of photo enforcement cameras being widely used.

Examining data over a ten-year period, from 2000 to 2010, researchers found a dramatic decrease in the number of fatal road traffic accidents after 2007. During the study period the number of speed camera on the roads increased from 14 to 84, a six-fold increase, with the majority being placed in 2007. Results of the data collected after 2007 showed fatal car accident rates had dropped to 15 per 100,000.

Until 2007, nearly two-thirds of all trauma-related deaths in Qatar were caused by car accidents with three quarters of the victims being under the age of 50. Traffic death rates in Qatar reached an all-time high in 2006 with a level of 26 per 100,000, compared to death rates in Western Europe and North America that range from 5 to 10 per 100,000.

The findings of the study have been recently published in the peer-reviewed British medical journal, Injury Prevention. The study was carried out in conjunction with the Supreme Council of Health who provided yearly data that forms the basis of comprehensive health reports and the traffic department of the Ministry of Interior provided additional information.

The authors of the study are Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, Associate Dean for Global and Public Health at WCMC-Q and Dr. Javid Sheikh, Dean of WCMC-Q, Dr. Mohammed Al-Thani, Director of Public Health Department, Supreme Council of Health and Dr. Al-Anoud Bint Mohammed Al Thani, Director of Health Promotion and Non-Communicable Diseases from the Department of Public Health and Dr. Albert Lowenfels, Department of Surgery, New York Medical College.

Dr. Sheikh said, “The reason why this collaborative research is important is because it brings to light the role that law enforcement interventions have played in reducing premature mortality from motor vehicle injuries in Qatar. The Department of Public Health, the Supreme Council of Health, under Sheikh Mohammed’s leadership have been wonderful partners in this initiative and we look forward to working with them on other projects of public health importance to the state of Qatar.”

Dr. Al-Thani said, “This research is proof of how effective policy and strong implementation can save lives. It is the first research study of its kind that the Supreme Council of Health has done with WCMC-Q and it’s a great starting point for sharing experience in different sectors of health. This partnership supports the Supreme Council of Health in having more academic views on research papers and practices while SCH supports WCMC-Q in the field of health and in addressing the real needs of our society.”

The study found that non-fatal severe injury rates also declined, but mild injury rates...
increased, possibly due to increased traffic congestion and improved notification. The authors note it is possible that speed cameras decreased speeding enough to affect the death rate, without affecting overall injury rates. This suggests that speed cameras are an important component of traffic control, but other measures will be required for maximum impact.

Dr. Mamtani said, “Our study shows that the traffic enforcement measures such as speed cameras have helped improve the safety of our roads in Qatar, but more measures are needed to continue to enhance road safety because there is room for improvement.”

In Qatar road traffic injuries have been considered an epidemic and more than 25 percent of drivers have been involved in a road traffic crash. Road traffic injuries are a major component of the global burden of disease and disability and, in most countries, are the major cause of death during the first few decades of life. In countries with high income levels within the Middle East, motor vehicle deaths are higher than in many other world regions where income levels are much lower.

Dr. Mamtani said, “As a public health official I keep up to date on important issues affecting the health of the country and, through reading relevant information, it became clear to me that road traffic fatalities are a problem. I saw that in the Middle East data shows premature mortality among the young on roads is high. Our study shows that this simple measure of speed cameras has resulted in a significant decline in fatalities. Furthermore, appropriate well-enforced laws have the potential for further reducing traffic death rates.”
WCMC-Q offers three summer programs targeting different age groups from grades 7-9: Q-SMARTS, aimed at students interested in a career in medicine and want to know more about what that entails. Finally, the Pre-College Enrichment program helps prospective college students in grades 11 and 12 prepare for the SAT exam and admissions interviews, an important aspect of getting through the college entry process. 

“These programs have become more and more popular every year,” said Noha Saleh, Director of Student Recruitment. “We have had around 350 applications this summer and in keeping with our high standards, we are only able to take students on merit. Therefore, those students who have an interest in the sciences and an adequate grasp of English are accepted on to the programs. This best prepares them for college life and professional careers later on as a high level of English will then be needed.”

Youngsters on the Q-SMARTS program (an acronym of Qatar Summer Math & Reading Talent Scholars) threw themselves into debating sessions where they learnt important skills in communication, analyzing information and mutual respect. They also took part in quizzes and watched a film about the inspirational story of Helen Keller, who conquered her vision and hearing disabilities to become a prolific and admired author.

“I really enjoyed the debates,” Anvita Nithwananda, a ninth grade student said, “I had a really great time. I hope to become an English language writer so I particularly enjoyed the English modules.” Faduma Hersi, another ninth grader said, “I
thought this would be all learning and hard work but actually it was
great fun and I made some new
friends too.” Other students on the
Q-SMART program enthused about
Harvey, the medical dummy used in
medical training. “It was amazing,
it had real skin and you could see
its lungs and it had a pulse,” said
Thomas.

Qatar Future Doctors, aimed at
students in grades 10-12, got an
opportunity to experience what it
would be like to practice medicine.
Dr. Hekmat Alrouh, M.D., himself a
graduate of WCMC-Q and one of
the Summer Enrichment Program
tutors explains, “We purposefully
included many practical sessions
where the students had the chance
to put themselves in the doctor’s
shoes and get a taste of how it
feels to be one,” he said.

“In one week the students were
able to discuss and diagnose a real
life medical case that required
multiple physicians and months to
resolve. They were able to measure
blood pressure and listen to the
beating of a real human heart. They
also had the chance to experiment
and play with cutting edge technolo-
gical instruments, mainly the ro-
botics surgery labs, showcased at
the Qatar Science and Technology
Park. We basically looked at some
of the most fun, exciting and re-
warding elements of each class we
took here as students and then built
a summer program around that,” Dr.
Alrouh said.

“We used standardized patients
for the first time on this program,”
said Abdulhadi Al-Saei, a second-
year medical student who helped
to coordinate the programs. “These
are basically everyday people who
pretend to have a set of symp-
toms to present to trainee doctors.
Students on the QFD are trained
to take vital signs, such as blood
pressure and heart rate, as well as
testing automatic responses like
reflexes.”

Rana Abu Al Saud, a student on
the QFD program, said she hopes to
become a doctor some day. “I found
listening to a human heart amazing,
especially on the training dummy
which has different heartbeats for
different conditions. I also thought
working with standardized patients
and taking blood pressure and pulse
readings was great fun and gave a
real sense of what it would be like
to become a doctor,” she said.

Professor Mohamud Verjee,
Director of the Primary Care and
Family Medicine Clerkship and
the Director of the Clinical Skills
Center, had a very active role in
working with the students and held
a question-and-answer session.

This afforded the students an op-
portunity of exploring ethical and
personal issues in medicine in
great detail. ❖
WCMC-Q Welcomes the Doctors of the Future

Over one hundred students were welcomed at WCMC-Q’s orientation programs at the start of the new academic year as new medical students and Pre-medical and Foundation program students joined the university.
White coats and stethoscopes were donned at the 8th annual White Coat Ceremony for our new medical students. Dr. Javaid I. Sheikh, dean of WCMC-Q, said, “As they do this they are acknowledging the responsibilities and obligations of their chosen profession. Students are aware that they now commit themselves to compassionate patient care and scientific excellence.”

The 43 students entering the Medical Program are graduates of the WCMC-Q Pre-medical Program and five are Qataris. In his welcome address, Dean Sheikh lauded the many accomplishments of the students during their pre-medical years, such as their work in biomedical research projects conducted through Qatar Foundation’s Undergraduate Research Experience Program and the Summer Student Research Program at the Cornell University campus in Ithaca, New York.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Basim Uthman, Professor of Neurology, reminded students about the importance of teamwork and the need to work together in the best interest of patients. The event was the culmination of three days of orientation for the new medical students and was attended by students’ families and friends as well as WCMC-Q faculty and administrators.

WCMC-Q also welcomed over 60 students into its Pre-medical and Foundation Programs at the opening ceremonies for the new academic year. Orientation for these students took in many fun and interesting activities including an Arabian Nights themed iftar dinner and a Murder Mystery quiz.

The Pre-medical Program is a two-year course that focuses on the sciences relevant to medicine as well as psychology and medical ethics. Among the 43 students on the Pre-medical Program, 12 are Qataris with the others being citizens of 16 different countries.

The Foundation Program is a year-long course that covers basic sciences, math and English. It is designed to build critical thinking and problem solving skills and encourages full participation among the students.

Other activities during the orientation included a Community Day where the new students filled gift bags with stationery which were then donated to Qatar Charity for distribution to school children. They were then encouraged to mix with the service staff of WCMC-Q who were invited to attend the closing iftar dinner.

“We are delighted to welcome these new students into the university and are sure they will greatly enjoy their time here. WCMC-Q facilities and resources are among the best in the Middle East and we produce the most skilled medical professionals in the region in support of the vision held by His Highness the Emir Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani and Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, for a knowledge-based society in Qatar,” Dr. Sheikh said.

First-year Pre-medical student Beverly Nobhay picks up her backpack and other supplies from Admissions Specialist Maysoon Aldalis during Pre-medical Orientation in August.

Above: Foundation students Al Jazi Al Mana, Ghoroor Ahmed, Al Jarahara Al-Jufairi, Shaikha Abdulla and Maryam Al Jaidah wrap boxes full of school supplies donated to kids in need.

Below: First year Pre-medical student Ali Khairat serves up iftar for workers on the WCMC-Q campus as part of the students’ service project.
First-year medical students learnt to treat broken limbs, seizures and life threatening wounds when they received an early introduction to the frenetic world of emergency treatment and trauma.

Students attended the Hamad International Training Center in Doha for the First Responder and Scene Safety session where they were involved with practical training to handle a variety of emergencies as part of their Medicine, Patient and Society course.

Dr. Lyuba Konopasek, the WCMC-Q Associate Dean for Medical Education and a team of emergency trauma specialists guided the medical students on treatment procedures and techniques for a range of injuries and ailments, including broken limbs, blocked airways, seizures and wounds.

Clinical Instructor in Medicine at WCMC-Q, Dr. Hina Ghory, M.D., facilitated the opportunity for these first-year med students to participate in such an exciting and challenging module. Dr. Ghory is also an Attending Physician in the Department of Emergency Medicine at WCMC-NY.

Emergency trauma and disaster response care makes up a large part of a doctor’s working life. The students were presented with case scenarios and had an opportunity to practice their skills on standardized patients.
Proper procedures for wound care, fractures, splints and slings were demonstrated and student, Aseel Abu-Dayya, said she was excited by the opportunity to practice her new skills. “This was a helpful exercise and it gave me confidence but it also gave me insight into the hard work and the many issues that medical doctors face almost daily in their careers,” Aseel said.

For Mohamed al-Hajjaji, a student from Qatar, it was an exciting time in his life and a good experience working in emergency situations. “I have enjoyed this program immensely. It was an excellent work experience,” he said.

“This was an exciting introduction to the world of medicine for me. I was a bit nervous at first but you gain confidence as you progress so it was an excellent learning experience all round,” commented student, Mujahed Laswi.

The students were also introduced to emergency medical care by Hamad Medical Corporation’s head of Emergency Medicine, Dr. Khaled Abdelnour Saifeldeen.

“It was an absolute pleasure to have had the opportunity to see the students and share with them what we believe is a unique and rewarding specialty,” Dr. Saifeldeen said. “It was also an opportunity to demonstrate to the students our commitment here at HMC to support their medical training and education and to provide them with a unique hospital-based clinical exposure for when they rotate with us.

“I am confident that WCMC-Q and the Department of Emergency Medicine would continue to collaborate and work together to meet the needs of the medical students throughout their study years and beyond,” Dr. Saifeldeen said.

by Hilton Kolbe
Students gained a rare opportunity to experience how medicine is practiced in a developing country through the recently launched Global and Public Health (GPH) department at WCMC-Q. Second-year medical students, Nadine Saad and Adam Shurbaji, traveled to Mwanza in Tanzania where they were able to observe and help treat patients at Bugando Medical Center.

“I believe that this experience, seeing how medicine is practiced in a resource limited hospital, whilst being immersed in another culture, will make me a better a doctor,” said Shurbaji.

The students were able to travel to Africa in July having received a grant through the GPH program. This is the first year that this opportunity has been offered by WCMC-Q, although the outreach program has been running for Weill Cornell students in New York for a number of years.

Associate Dean for Global and Public Health, Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, said, “We believed that this is a worthwhile program that complements their medical education. It is particularly relevant to students who want to pursue a career in global and public health research. The dean, Dr. Javaid Sheikh, agreed to sponsor two students a year and the program is organized with the support of WCMC in New York.”

Once in Tanzania the students participate in ward rounds and are able to observe the treatment of patients in a number of departments under the mentorship of Dr. Robert Peck, WCMC’s Assistant Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics. They must also complete a research project on an issue that medically benefits the hospital.

Saad said, “I spent two weeks in the labor ward and pediatrics. I also spent time in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and health clinics.

Discovering Medicine in the Developing World
Everybody was so welcoming. It is amazing to see how medicine is applied in an environment that has so little resources. What I found was that doctors had to rely heavily on physical examinations and that people would die of completely preventable diseases.”

The two students commented on the sparse nature of the hospitals, they found that the building itself was very bleak and that the wards were particularly empty. Saad says, “It strikes you that there is very little equipment around. There are no monitors on the wards, except in the ICU and very little privacy. For example, women were giving birth in shared wards with just a curtain around their beds and doctors and visitors wandering through the ward. We are very lucky that we do not have to deal with that here.”

Social and political problems in Tanzania mean that despite having some wealth giving natural resources, the majority of the people are struggling under very poor conditions. This experience was not lost on the students. Despite these difficulties both students commented on the dedication and commitment of the medical students and doctors struggling under challenging conditions to bring better healthcare to the people.

Shurbaji says, “My experience was unforgettable. I saw preventable suffering, destitute and appalling living conditions, rare diseases and people dying through lack of education in health or safety issues. Yet I also saw some of the most resilient and resourceful physicians I have ever come across. I worked with doctors who gave up money and lifestyles abroad to serve their people and train younger generations of physicians.”

Applications open in May for first year med students who want to experience the program in 2012.

by Sarah Spendiff
A New Networking Frontier
— SOCIAL MEDIA & SCIENCE

Social media may not be the first thing that people link to science, particularly life sciences. However, today some science professionals are using social media to share their research, cultivate feedback and be more effectively involved in their community. The use of social media networking is already prevalent in Qatar, according to Doha News, more than 80 percent of Qataris between the ages of 20 to 24 engage in social networking daily. Although there is some evidence to suggest there is growing use of social media in more mature populations too.

In recent years social media tools such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook have changed the way people interact by allowing them to digitally share news, images, videos or just everyday thoughts. Many large organizations have incorporated social media as part of their business model to enhance community involvement, raise their online profile and focus on corporate social responsibility.

Recently the QatarDebate organization met at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar to debate the use of social networking and online services. The focus was on Arabic digital content, Arabic language, and Arabic tweets to raise awareness of the issues surrounding the Arabic language and its use in digital content.

Today, social media is proving itself to be a useful community-building tool in science. For example, LinkedIn is a business-related social networking site that connects users of similar professional backgrounds. Some science professionals are members of LinkedIn’s Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS) group. This group shares research findings, promotes relevant seminars and provides feedback on the latest laboratory systems and techniques, among other activities.

Additionally, social media campaigns can help raise donations and awareness for important causes. The Stand Up to Cancer Facebook page has over 700,000 subscribers. This example demonstrates an encouraging relationship between social media and possible funding opportunities for medical research.

The popularity of social media could be due to the degree of user control. With reference to patient forums, the Internet can serve as an anonymous space where individuals with similar conditions can discuss personal experiences, treatments, and lifestyle changes. This can help to create a safe virtual community.

As a researcher conducting studies in large population cohorts, Professor Karsten Suhre, Director Bioinformatics Core at WCMC-Q, was amazed by how open people are when questioned online. He noticed that during face-to-face interviews a study participant might want to please the study leader rather than answer a question accurately. However, this phenomenon was usually absent when using the Internet, which can be a very useful tool when asking a delicate question relating to lifestyle, nutrition, or other factors influencing any particular disease.

Professor Suhre said, “Social media opens totally new possibilities for online, questionnaire-based, health related studies and this form of media allows us to address topics that could never be addressed in face-to-face interviews.”

Needless to say, it is important to verify any information discussed on medical chat forums as some patients may use it to self-diagnose. Dr. Lyuba Konopasek, Associate Dean for Medical Education and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at WCMC-Q, said, “The fact that many patients have already looked up illnesses and symptoms on the Internet makes it especially important for physicians to elicit patients’ understanding of their illness or symptoms at the beginning of the encounter. We are developing some communication skills training cases for our students aimed at teaching them how to speak with patients about information they may have gathered from the web.”

In order to integrate social media in science, we have to address common misconceptions. For example, medicine may be seen as a conservative field, while social media may be mislabeled as purely unserious. This view seems to be the main obstacle in getting professionals to adopt social media.

Social media is a growing platform that is being shaped by how we use it so it is important to learn how to use it effectively. This growing digital media offers a sea of undiscovered innovative ideas to serve our community at large and may well be worth a second look.

by Mustafa Ahmed

Take a look at some of WCMC-Q’s new social media pages:

- Watch out for exclusive video content
  Subscribe to WCMC-Q YouTube: youtube.com/WeillCornellQatar
- Be the first to know up-to-date news
  Follow WCMC-Q on Twitter: twitter.com/WCMCQ
- Be part of our dynamic community!
  Like WCMC-Q on Facebook: facebook.com/WeillCornellQatar
Supporting Her Highness Sheikha Moza’s vision for a knowledge-based society, WCMC-Q presents two outstanding students who have successfully completed the first Biomedical Research Training Program offered exclusively for Qatari Nationals in our cutting edge research labs.

Kawthar Al-Dabhani, who graduated in biochemistry from Buffalo University NY and Nawaf Al-Taweel, a pharmacology graduate from Leeds University in the UK, will go on to pursue careers in the challenging field of Biomedical Research.

“I am really happy to have completed this program. It gave me hands on experience of what it is like working on real biomedical research projects. This has been an invaluable experience in helping me decide how best to progress my career,” said Al-Dabhani.

Open to Qatari Nationals who are college graduates with degrees in disciplines related to science, the program gives a unique opportunity to gain hands on experience in world-class research labs that produce results published internationally. Students are given a stipend whilst studying as well as other benefits such as health insurance.

The program is fully funded by WCMC-Q as an extension to the Qatar Science Leadership Program established by the Research Division at Qatar Foundation, which aims to produce world-class Qatari scientists to lead the research centers of excellence that are at the very heart of Qatar’s vision for its future.

“WCMC-Q continues to be at the forefront of cutting edge research in Qatar and this program affords a platform for Qatari nationals to shape the future of medicine and biomedical research in the region,” said Khaled Machaca, Ph.D., Associate Dean for Research.

The research project Al-Dabhani worked on focused on the role of calreticulin, a protein that is critical for protein folding and Ca2+ homeostasis in cells. Al-Taweel looked at the effects of an anti-cancer drug, Cisplatin, on cell death and how to overcome the cells’ resistance to being treated with Cisplatin.

“I was very excited to be working on this because cancer research and particularly physiology and pharmacology are areas that fascinate me,” said Al-Taweel. “Part of our research focused on how tumor cell death occurs not only through DNA damage caused by Cisplatin but also via higher levels of calcium in the cells. Our research showed Cisplatin resistant cells have a higher restriction in calcium entry.”

In other words, cancer cells that are resistant to Cisplatin have a higher resistance to calcium entry. These findings, although not unique to this lab, are important as those who undergo cancer treatment with Cisplatin are not able to simply increase dosage as cells become resistant to the drug due to the toxic side effects. Therefore, decreasing cells resistance to the drug enhances prognosis and outcomes for patients.

Having completed the training program, both students will further their education. Al-Taweel intends to do a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology whilst Al-Dabhani will participate in a Qatar Science Leadership Program (QSLP) Internship Program with a view to becoming a lab manager and Al-Taweel has applied to Weill Cornell in New York to do a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology. ✪
Three medical students from WCMC-Q have recently presented their research project at the Annual Summer Conference on Teachers Bio-Ethics in Zaragoza, Spain and then had it published in Diario Médico, a leading Spanish medical newspaper.

Tarek Elshazly, Deena Wafadari and Rim El Chak, all second-year medical students, conducted the study under the guidance of their tutor, Dr. Pablo Rodríguez del Pozo, Associate Professor of Public Health, Division of Medical Ethics. The project, called ‘Doctors’ Attitudes on Disclosing Information to Cancer Patients in Qatar’, was supported by the Qatar National Research Fund’s UREP program, (Undergraduate Research Experience Program).

“This was the first time that a study on physicians’ attitudes towards informing patients with cancer has been carried out in the Gulf area, and would serve to set a baseline that will help detect changing attitudes in the future,” said Dr. Rodríguez del Pozo. Dr. Ziyad Mahfoud from the Department of Public Health at WCMC-Q oversaw statistics and methodology of the study.

The project was aimed at answering questions such as what are doctors’ policies regarding informing – or not informing – patients about their diagnosis of cancer; what factors influence their policies and are these policies flexible?

The wider remit of the study, like every UREP project, was aimed at getting students to experience and understand the complexities involved in conducting such research programs. These issues include understanding the doctrine of informed consent, organizational and problem solving skills, developing procedures to obtain relevant data and administering a research budget.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, Associate Dean for Research said, “Tarek, Deena and Rim have proved their capabilities and skills. Working across departments in HMC and with physicians and patients, they have uncovered some interesting facts about the doctor-patient relationship in Qatar. Their success highlights the limitless potential of our students at WCMC-Q and the importance of the UREP funding mechanism in advancing student education and research knowhow in Qatar.”

The study the students presented in Spain showed that the vast majority of doctors consider patients must be informed about their diagnosis of cancer. It further concluded that this opinion does not correlate with the physician’s social or demographic status such as age, sex or national origin. It also found that the majority of physicians are willing to be flexible in their policy on informing patients. Where doctors were flexible on informing patients, this was largely due to the characteristics of the patient, taking in considerations such as emotional stability, age and intellectual ability. Another interesting finding was that most of the doctors involved in the study felt that more research should be done in this area and that their policy could change in the future as the result of such research.

“This would show that there is no rigid position among doctors about this issue. On the contrary, there would be a permanent quest for the right policy, even if, in principle, most of them agree that the patient must be kept informed,” says Dr. Rodríguez del Pozo.

Dr. Ismail Helmy, Assistant Director Medical Education at Hamad Medical Corporation was the HMC liaison on the project. »
As part of WCMC-Q’s commitment to the wider community, a series of public lectures on important and topical health issues are held every month. These community outreach lectures, Medicine and U, are held in conjunction with the academic Special Research Seminars that are also open to the public and feature world-renowned experts from leading medical centers across the globe.

The Medicine and U public lecture series is a continuing program targeted at a general audience where medical and scientific issues are translated into easy to understand terms. WCMC-Q faculty members deliver some of the lectures, others feature guest lecturers from the U.S. and all are held at one of the WCMC-Q lecture halls at the WCMC-Q campus in Education City.

Organized and initiated by Dr. Basim Uthman, a world-renowned expert on epilepsy and an internationally respected neurologist, Dr. Uthman is WCMC-Q’s Professor of Clinical Neurology. The public lecture series is a means of raising awareness about illness in the community, something Dr. Uthman feels passionate about. “It is important to me to share my knowledge and expertise. I believe, to feel part of a community, you need to get involved in that community with whatever expertise you have. As a doctor, if I can help just one patient through Medicine and U lecture series, then that’s what I want to do.”

Dr. Marcellina Mian, Professor of Pediatrics and Director for Special Projects who assists Dr. Uthman with organizing the lectures explained, “We hear about new developments in health care every day, and WCMC-Q wants to give members of the community an opportunity to learn about some of these developments in a series of lectures aimed specifically at people who are not in the medical profession.” Last January Dr. Mian gave a lecture on childhood fever, and pointed out that, whilst parents will naturally worry about their child having a temperature, not all fevers require medical treatment. “A normal fever of between 100 and 104 degrees Fahrenheit helps children fight infection,” she said.

A variety of ailments have been under discussion ranging from serious life threatening diseases to more moderate conditions such as heartburn and poor diet. Dr. Mamoon Elbedawi, assistant professor of medicine at WCMC-Q spoke about common causes of heartburn in March and gave advice on how to avoid it. Associate Dean for Global and Public Health and Professor of Public Health, Dr. Ravinder Mamtani discussed possible health risks of international travel, especially to regions where there are less developed health and hygiene standards.

Among the many other discussions at Medicine and U was WCMC-Q’s Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Dr. Hassen El-Amin’s lecture on schizophrenia. He said, “Although there is no cure for schizophrenia, there are treatments and medications that can help control the symptoms, decrease their severity, even make them disappear completely in some people.” In October, traditionally Breast Cancer Awareness month, Dr. Shahinaz Bedri, Assistant Professor of Pathology, highlighted the importance of early detection in the continuing fight against breast cancer and the need for women to have regular check-ups. Dr. Bedri’s message was clear: early detection and treatment of breast cancer is vitally important.

Professor James Strain, a world-renowned psychiatrist from the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York, visited WCMC-Q during the summer to give a Special Research Seminar on depression as a systemic illness. His wife, Dr. Gladys Strain, who spoke on the effects of bariatric surgery on mind and body, joined Dr. Strain. She is Associate Research Professor of Nutrition in Surgery at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York.

Both the Medicine and U lecture series and the Special Research Seminars were well received and the success of the outreach programs have been assured with a continued commitment as WCMC-Q advances its mission of excellence in medicine and training.
Reflections of Pink:
Breast Cancer and the Importance of Early Detection

October is Pink month the world over and a reminder to us all of the great strides made in the fight against cancer and breast cancer in particular. It is a memorial and testament to those women and men who have suffered and survived and to those who have passed away.

It is also a time to recognize the achievements of scientists, healthcare professionals and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of breast cancer in the hope of finding a cure. The message they all wish to convey is that early detection and treatment of breast cancer is vitally important.

Various events the world over mark this month such as fundraisers and posters, all serving as a reminder that we can and must make a difference in the lives of our friends and colleagues, our sisters, mothers, wives and daughters. However, modern media avails to us a bouquet of messages; some of them are mixed - particularly in the avenue of early detection and treatment of breast cancer.

Breast cancer remains a significant disease throughout the world and the number one killer of women aged between 20-59 in high-income countries. Worldwide statistics point to breast cancer as the most prevalent cancer in women and one of the major causes of morbidity and mortality.

Increasing age still remains the greatest risk factor for women developing breast cancer. Men are 100 times less likely to get breast cancer than women. Men with breast cancer constitute only 1-4 percent of those affected in some of the countries in the MENA region. However, for the same stage of the disease, (the advancement of cancer in the body), the outlook for both men and women remain the same, according to current studies. In most of these countries our women present late and therefore are more likely to die sooner as a result.

Some women and men are more at risk of breast cancer than others due to detrimental genetic mutations (negative structural changes in their genes). Other risk factors may also co-exist such as obesity, reproductive causes such as long term use of oral contraceptives, prolonged estrogen exposure, smoking and chronic alcohol use, amongst others.

Disease burden outlook, with modern day therapy has improved and women in Western countries have an 80-90 percent chance of survival, however women from developing and underdeveloped countries do not fare as well with survival rates ranging between 40-60 percent.

The disparity in survival rates is not simply due to the fact that in MENA region and sub-Saharan African countries women present at a younger age and with aggressive disease but also because they are not always aware that breast cancer is treatable and when detected early yields higher cure rates and a better health and psychological outlook.

Breast cancer treatment is now a multi-team therapeutic model from prevention (particularly for women with a family history) to survival with professionally trained caregivers including surgeons, oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, psychologists, nurses, pharmacists and caseworkers.

Early detection mandated by many countries and health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) remains the optimal and primary goal. Organized health infrastructures are the best weapon. Early detection requires two modalities in order to reduce morbidity and increase survival, the first is early diagnosis and the second is screening, in particular by mammography. The first and second modalities depend on breast cancer awareness by the population at large. If it is lacking our women will not show up to the breast health clinics.

The best method of screening is the mammogram. However, many countries in Africa, Asia and South America cannot afford mammography screening programs. Therefore these countries have to tailor specific programs for early detection. Furthermore, in spite of the availability of mammography in some MENA region countries, access to mammography has been low. The end result of which is that more women present late with breast cancer.

The question is why do these women suffer quietly and either never show up or present late when most of their only treatment options becomes palliative care, that is end stage pain treatment? Many reasons exist for this, and studies are now underway to determine why women default from early cancer screening programs. However, one main reason may be that the message of Breast Cancer Awareness has been mixed and not transmitted in the optimum way to at risk populations and possibly even to health personnel, our first line of defense and the patients’ primary advocate.

Breast cancer awareness messages in the West are not tailored for the rest of the world, therefore it is the responsibility of health organizations and NGOs to create messages that will encourage women to go for early diagnosis and screening. These messages have to be of hope and survival and perhaps, if more of our survivors speak out, we can make strides in the fight against breast cancer.

by Dr. Shahinaz Bedri, Assistant Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at WCMC-Q
It has been a long and sometimes rocky road of learning and discovery for WCMC-Q’s Professor of Clinical Neurology, Dr. Basim Uthman. The journey has taken him from war ravaged Lebanon, via research laboratories in Gainesville, Florida, to the tranquil surrounds of Education City in Doha where he holds the Vice Chair of Neurology.

Dr. Uthman’s credentials are impeccable. He is a specialist in neurology and a subspecialist in epilepsy and clinical neurophysiology. He is board certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and the American Board of Clinical Neurophysiology.

In between, he also finds time to learn the clarinet and share a love of music with his three young children.

In the three years that he has been at WCMC-Q, Dr. Uthman and his colleagues have been organizing and delivering the Medicine and U public outreach lecture series as a means of raising awareness about illness in the community. “To me as a doctor, I feel that part of our obligations to the community where we live is to educate the community. So if I can help even as few as one more patient from a talk that a colleague or I give or moderate, I want to do that,” he said.

A world-renowned expert on epilepsy and an internationally respected neurologist, Professor Uthman remains humble to his calling in medicine. He is also passionate about helping others and the need for quality patient care. As a faculty member in WCMC-Q and a consultant at the affiliated teaching tertiary medical center of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Dr. Uthman embraces the need for high quality undergraduate and graduate medical education that will lead to well-trained, safe, competent and compassionate doctors.

Born in Tripoli, Lebanon, Dr. Uthman moved to Beirut to complete his final years of high school before starting a baccalaureate degree on a scholarship. His schooling was interrupted at the American University in Beirut when civil war broke out in Lebanon in 1975. Nonetheless, he managed to graduate on the Dean’s Honors list with a degree in biology and chemistry and then started medical school.

“There then moved to the University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, and worked with world renowned epileptologist, Dr. B.J. Wilder and learned the ropes about clinical research, how to run clinical trials in epilepsy and neurodegenerative disease. I feel blessed I was at the right place and the right time when I had the opportunity to be one of the first pioneers to study the safety feasibility of vagus nerve stimulation (VNS), a novel untraditional therapy for patients with refractory epilepsy,” Dr. Uthman said.

Dr. Uthman hopes to start a Gulf Epilepsy Foundation with an aim of raising awareness of epilepsy in Qatar and the GCC region. He was asked by the International League against Epilepsy to lead a task force that included colleagues in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Lebanon to come up with statements that would apply to the lives of patients with epilepsy and policies regarding epilepsy.

“What I am hoping for is that we can partner with the government on this issue. We have a wonderful government here in Qatar. They are progressive and very open to improvement of lives of people in general. Qatar is a good working place and a safe and nurturing environment for my young family; I look forward to many years of productivity here,” Dr. Uthman said.
First-year medical students at WCMC-Q took part in a collaboration with the Doha Film Institute as part of their Humanities and Medicine program and made short films at their orientation with them.

The students created two-minute films to produce a snapshot of issues they currently considered to be important to their career objectives. The documentaries will be kept locked away until they graduate and then the students will review them and compare their answers to their views at graduation.

The students then had the exciting opportunity of getting behind the cameras with the DFI crew to learn more about this particular mode of communication. The idea being to focus on film as a means of sharpening communication skills, enhancing observation skills and adding a new dimension to striking a healthy work-life balance for students.

The links between film and medical studies may not be immediately evident, but Associate Dean for Medical Education at WCMC-Q, Dr. Lyuba Konopasek, believes media studies can benefit medical students to become better-rounded professionals in their career. “Film gives us a shared experience of watching together,” she said. “It gives us an opportunity for self-reflection, and it encourages observation and discussion.”

Dr. Konopasek said, “The study of the humanities helps us to become better observers and interpreters of our world and the world of our patients. They can also help us to reflect on ourselves, what motivates our actions, how we engage with others — we get to know ourselves better and thus can engage better with our patients. All of these things can make the difference between being a good doctor and a great doctor.”

Ben Robinson, Senior Educator at the Doha Film Institute, screened a selection of short films made by his own students, which the class was asked to critique. “It is particularly interesting to see where students saw the sources of conflict and human struggle in the films — the root of all good story-telling,” Robinson said. “To be a great doctor, you have to be a well-rounded human being, able to communicate fluently with your colleagues, and empathize with your patients. All those vital, intensive hours of study need to be balanced with some cultural activity in order to help the aspiring medical practitioner to be more open minded.”

*by Hilton Kolbe*
Looking back over ten years, Havva Idriss, Vice Dean of Administration, is able to say, Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar is what it is today, and it has been a privilege to have had the opportunity to be part of it. Having been part of the senior management team from the very inception, when WCMC-Q was no more than an ambitious idea of the partnership between the Qatar Foundation and Weill Cornell, Ms. Idriss has helped nurture the branch campus through its first challenging decade.

The official announcement that Cornell University was to establish a branch of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar offering the same degree as the US university came in April 2001. The agreement was signed on January 25, 2001 following a series of meetings among the leadership of QF and WCMC. At that time Ms. Idriss was a Senior Vice President of the New York Presbyterian Healthcare System.

“Building something from scratch is very different from managing an established organization,” she says. “It requires a different set of skills and there were a number of challenges. First of all, unlike today, in 2001 most people didn’t know where Qatar was or what was happening here. It was difficult to find people who were inspired by the vision to come here; it was a challenge in the early days. But it has changed significantly and it is very different now when trying to recruit faculty or staff, one is able to attract a good number of people with excellent credentials.”
In August 2001 Ms. Idriss was one of the first three appointments made when she became the Vice Dean for Administration. Dr. Daniel Alonso, then the Senior Associate Dean for Education in New York had been appointed Dean and Dr. David Robertshaw as Associate Dean for Premedical Education. The following month 9/11 happened. The three were working out of offices in New York at the time, where emotive reactions to the Twin Towers terrorist atrocity was naturally running higher than anywhere else in the world.

“It appeared questionable to us as to whether our board would decide to continue with the project. Would they, in light of 9/11, remain committed to it? But to our pleasant surprise, our leadership at the time, Chairman Sanford I. Weill, Dean Antonio Gotto and Cornell University President, Hunter Rawlings all remained committed to the program with tremendous vision and foresight under those difficult circumstances.

“When Mr. Weill opened the October 2001 meeting of the board of overseers of the medical college he did so by expressing the importance of looking at the potential of this program, not for today, but for tomorrow, as he put. If it hadn’t been for the vision of our leadership we wouldn’t be here today,” said Ms. Idriss.

The work that followed required close collaboration between both institutions, Qatar Foundation and Weill Cornell, because, as Ms. Idriss says, there were plenty of challenges. The first being getting the administrative infrastructure established, closely followed by ensuring the building was up and running.

“That was one of my first experiences following my appointment. Myself and about 25 others, including colleagues, architects, engineers and project managers from New York, Qatar and Japan flew to London in August of 2001 for a meeting about the structure of the building. Construction started in April 2002 and, complex though it was, the building was completed in just 15 months, while we were housed in the Qatar Academy during the first year of our operation.” says Ms. Idriss.

According to Ms. Idriss, to make a success out of expat life, it is important to understand the environment you are moving into and be flexible and adaptable. She says, “In a developing environment like this there isn’t necessarily all the established regulatory agencies you might find in the US. The authorities here have been very helpful and supportive in getting these set up. Whether licensing of WCMC-Q physicians to practice in Qatar, importation of biological materials and cadavers, success would not have been possible without the help of Qatari leadership.”

Having flown back and forth a few times, Ms. Idriss moved here in May 2002 and with Drs. Alonso and Robertshaw, set about recruiting students immediately. She says, “Long before we came here we lined up prospective faculty. The implementation was based on opening one class each year. Therefore we established our first class of pre-med one students in August 2002. As they moved through the year, we established pre-med two and so on. In that way the university grew organically as each class was established. However once each year was established, it didn’t mean you were finished, they still required adjusting, resourcing and building on.”

In 2008 the first medical students to graduate from WCMC-Q were sworn in with the Hippocratic oath. Since then, every year the numbers of graduates have grown. Looking back over the past decade, what does Ms. Idriss feel most proud of?

“Overall, what I feel most good about is what I view to be a very professional, competent, stable and sustainable administrative team that took ten years to build. I feel very good about the institution as a whole, where the vision came from and where WCMC-Q is headed, reaching new heights in future years – it’s been a privilege. To this day, this is still the only American medical college to offer its own degree in another country. To have been part of this incredible vision and in some small way, if I have been able to contribute to that vision, I am honored.”

In January 2012, after ten years and five months of service to WCMC-Q in Qatar, Havva Idriss will be returning to her native New York. In bidding her farewell, Dean Sheikh says, “WCMC-Q owes her a big debt of gratitude for providing invaluable leadership throughout the first phase of our existence. She has provided tireless dedication, superb work ethic, consistency, incredible patience and a strong commitment to provide a friendly working environment for our faculty, staff and students.”
Snapshots from the Annual Employee Dinner

Members of the Faculty and Staff celebrated the Annual Employee Welcome Dinner at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in October. New employees were welcomed, employees with over five years of work at WCMC-Q were recognized. Everyone had a chance to mingle and have fun together outside of work.

From left to right: Hazra Hadee, Sian Pearson, Russell Clarke, Fahad Malik, Shahzad Jafri, Moiz Motiwala and Badar Khan

Left to right: Emma French, Jackie Keelor and Director of Human Resources Amanda Brailsford

Noura Al-Okkah from the Office of Public Affairs receives five years recognition award by the Dean and Vice-Dean for Administration.

WCMC-Q employees group photos
WCMC-Q Contributes to the Success of World Diabetes Day

As part of World Diabetes Day several events were held throughout Doha to present research findings and educate the general public on the prevention and treatment of diabetes.

The events were organized by HMC in collaboration with the Supreme Council of Health, Qatar Diabetes Association and WCMC-Q.

Clockwise from top: Dr. Laith Abu Raddad, Assistant Professor of Public Health gave a presentation and was part of a panel at the Sheraton Hotel. Nada Hassen, Marketing Communications Specialist, spoke to nurses at HMC about WCMC-Q and our involvement in the event. Dr. Karsten Suhre presented his statistical findings on diabetes at HMC.
Students Celebrate International Night

International Night was a hit with students, faculty and staff alike. With booths set up from different countries, a buffet of international food as well as fun and traditional talent acts there was something for everyone.

Clockwise from top left:
- A group of students perform the traditional Arab Dabke dance.
- Foundation student Ghoroor Ahmed shouts out her answer during the quiz section of the show.
- Students react to a popular student singer.
- Supriya Geradine performs a traditional Indian dance.
WCMC-Q Participates in the Qatar Foundation Annual Research Forum

The Qatar Foundation Annual Research Forum was held in November. Numerous faculty, researchers and students from WCMC-Q presented their research findings at the three day event. Clockwise from top: Dr. Khaled Machaca, Associate Dean for Research, in a panel discussing WCMC-Q’s research program and how it integrates into the vision of Qatar’s future. Dr. Christopher Triggle, Professor of Pharmacology Assistant Dean for Admissions, speaks on his research into diabetes. Second-year medical student Ahmed Al-Saei presents during a Biomedical breakout session.
Mole Day!

As they do every October the Foundation students put on a celebration of Mole Day. Mole Day commemorates Avogadro’s Number ($6.02 \times 10^{23}$), which is a basic measuring unit in chemistry. Mole Day was created as a way to foster interest in chemistry. Schools throughout the United States and around the world celebrate Mole Day with various activities related to chemistry and/or moles.
Zahra Hejji explains the meaning of Mole Day to the audience.

Dr. Sheila Qureshi thanks the students for their hard work and success in planning Mole Day.

Dr. Sohaila Cheema takes a test tube of refreshments from student Shaikha Abdulla.

Fabad Al-Marri, Khalid Al-Marri and Jaber Al Abda, as Amadeo Avogadro act in a skit with their interpretation of how the mole was discovered.
Dr. Haddad joined WCMC-Q in September 2011 as Associate Professor of Clinical Neurology.

Prior to joining WCMC-Q, Dr. Haddad served as Associate Professor in the Department of Neurology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he taught numerous medical students and residents.

He was also an Attending Physician in Neurology at the UAMS Medical Center (2001-2011) and was an Attending Physician in Neurology at the Central Arkansas Veterans Health Care System (VA) in Little Rock (2001-2006).

Dr. Haddad’s research interests focus around neurophysiology and epilepsy. Since 2005, he has been involved in magnetoencephalography (MEG) recordings for neonates and fetuses in collaboration with the Department of Obstetrics at UAMS. He is also actively involved in multiple multicenter drug trials on epilepsy treatment sponsored by pharmaceutical companies.

Dr. Haddad is a member of the American Academy of Neurology, the American Epilepsy Society, and the American Clinical Neurophysiology Society.

He is widely published in peer-reviewed journals and his most recent joint publication in Experimental Neurology [2011 Apr; 228(2):200-5] titled Correlation between fetal brain activity patterns and behavioral states: an exploratory fetal magnetoencephalography study.

Dr. Bedri joined WCMC-Q in September 2011 as Assistant Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.

Dr. Bedri joins WCMC-Q from Ahfad University for Women in Omdurman, Sudan where she was a faculty member and a researcher in the Biotechnology Lab. She also worked as a diagnostic pathologist at Ahfad University affiliate hospitals including the Khartoum Breast Care Centre where she directed the immunohistochemistry laboratory.

Previously, Dr. Bedri directed a Pre-clinical Phase I Biomarker laboratory in the Oncology Translational Laboratories at Novartis Institute for Biomedical Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Other positions held by Dr. Bedri included Clinical Instructor in the Pathology Department at Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston (1997-2001); Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Clinical and Research Fellow in the Department of Pathology and Cardiovascular Pathology at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston (2004-2007); and Co-director of the Cardiovascular Pathology Core Laboratory at Massachusetts General Hospital Boston, Harvard Medical School (2004–2007).

Dr. Bedri's diagnostic and research interests focus on cardiovascular disease, breast cancer, gynecological cancers, and the biomarkers of chronic disease.

She is a fellow of the College of American Pathology, a member of the Arab Medical Association Against Cancer, a member of the diagnostic panel in the Arab Taskforce Against Cancer (KSA-NGHA), and a former president of the New England Pathology Residents Society (NEPRS).