Mapping the oryx genome to help ensure the survival of the species for generations
His Excellency Abdulla Bin Khalid Al Qahtani, Minister of Public Health and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Health, receives a plaque of appreciation from Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Dean of WCMC-Q, at the inauguration of the new health initiative.
Graduation 2012
WCMC-Q honors its newest doctors as they take the first steps into their professional lives

Head size and Parkinson’s
Dr. Dennis Mook-Kanamori discusses research that has found a link between the circumference of the head and Parkinson’s disease

Medicine in a war zone
Doctors from Medecins Sans Frontieres discuss their experiences with the organization

Protecting a national treasure
Researchers map the oryx genome for the first time leading to hopes of improved breeding programs

Farewell to Frank
Professor Frank Smith leaves WCMC-Q after ten years while four other faculty members talk about the highlights of their time in Doha.

History in Qatar
Foundation students visit Sheikh Faisal Museum
Students at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) celebrated after learning where they will spend their residency programs following graduation.

The results were announced at WCMC-Q’s Match Day, an annual event in the U.S. when students in medical schools across the country who are applying for residency training programs learn the name of the hospital where they will receive advance training in their medical specialty.

Of the 31 students seeking post-graduate placements, 20 will be continuing their training in the U.S. while eight will go to Hamad Medical Corporation. The remaining three will pursue research work for a year.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Dean of WCMC-Q, offered his warmest congratulations to the students on behalf of all the faculty and staff at the college.

He said: “WCMC-Q graduates have again shown that they can successfully compete with their peers from the U.S., gaining residencies at some of the best medical institutions in the United States.

“Significantly, several students also chose to complete postgraduate training at Hamad Medical Corporation, demonstrating that the continued improvement of standards of such training at Hamad and its recent accreditation by the American Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has made it very attractive for our graduates.”

The U.S. institutions that have accepted students include New York – Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Brooklyn Hospital Center.

Rama El-Yafawi matched with Virginia Commonwealth University Health System to train in internal medicine and said her time at WCMC-Q had prepared her well for the future.

She said: “The college is a small community and because of that we really learned about camaraderie and working as a team and that will definitely help me in the future.

“Eventually I hope to be involved in global health as I love traveling,” she added, “so hopefully I’ll get to see different places and make a difference in the world.”
Funding of $4.5 million for date palm research

Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar won the first award in the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) Exceptional Proposal program with Dr. Karsten Suhre, Professor of Physiology and Director of the Bioinformatics Core, and Dr. Joel Malek, Director of the Genomics Core, awarded a five-year grant of $US4.5 million for their project Establishing World Leadership in Date Palm Research in Qatar.

QNRF established the National Priorities Research Program - Exceptional Proposal (NPRP-EP) to provide funding for projects of exceptional scientific merit that require money and time in excess of that provided under the annual NPRP funding program.

WCMC-Q Associate Dean for Research, Dr. Khaled Machaca, congratulated Dr. Suhre and Dr. Malek on their enormous achievement and recognized QNRF’s vision and goals in funding the research.

Dr. Machaca said: “Funding of this project will establish Qatar as a hub for date palm research building on the completion of the genome sequence by the Cornell team, with great potential for scientific productivity and commercialization in the future.”

The proposal combines two innovative technologies that are well established at WCMC-Q, genomics and metabolomics, in an interdisciplinary approach to date palm research, which addresses major challenges of the field. WCMC-Q is collaborating with the Ministry of Environment’s Biotechnology Center in Qatar, the Helmholtz Centre in Munich, the French National Institute for Agricultural Research, and the European Institute for Research and Development.

“We are very excited about the research opportunities that are offered to WCMC-Q by this project, and in particular the confidence that QNRF puts into our team by awarding us this grant,” Dr. Suhre said.

“WCMC-Q has spearheaded date palm research in the past by determining its genome and identifying genetic markers for important physiological traits. Qatar is probably one of the rare places in the world where you can translate know-how between initially very distant fields and cross-pollinate ideas from human health research to plant genetics and back.”

Dr. Malek said the goal of the project was to better understand date palm biology and link the genetics of the date palm to date palm characteristics such as fruit color, flavor and ability to resist disease or environmental stress.

He said it was an exciting time for researchers at WCMC-Q and the latest acquisition of funds would go a long way towards contributing to the development of new information.

“We are hoping to identify genes that control the most important traits in date palms for the purpose of developing date palm agriculture in Qatar,” he added. “The group includes the Ministry of Environment’s Biotechnology Center, led by Masoud Al-Marri, who will conduct testing on date palm tolerance to salt water among other environmental stresses. The international team will significantly advance current knowledge of the molecular biology of date palm that is critical to the Arabian Gulf. Ultimately the knowledge will improve the date palm industry in the Arabian Gulf.”

Dr. Malek and the Genomics Core group led the original sequencing of the date palm genome and will continue their work on understanding date palm genetics. Dr. Suhre will continue his foundational work on understanding the link between genetics and metabolomics by extending these studies into date palms for the first time.
The hard work and success of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar’s (WCMC-Q) Class of 2012 was celebrated as the college’s latest graduates earned the right to call themselves ‘doctors’ for the first time.

The 32 graduating students – WCMC-Q’s largest ever graduating class - crossed the stage in front of proud family, friends and faculty members to receive their U.S. medical degrees at a ceremony held at Qatar National Convention Centre.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Dean of WCMC-Q, paid tribute to their dedication and spoke of the role they can play in the future.

Dr. Sheikh said: “Convocation is a day of immense joy and pride for all the faculty and staff at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar. Nothing gives us greater pleasure than witnessing our talented students fulfill their dream of being called ‘Doctor’ for the first time.

“The Class of 2012 have a passion for learning, a spirit of inquiry and a dedication to the improvement of human lives. Such wonderful attributes have brought these young physicians the rewards that we all enjoy celebrating with them today.

“As our graduates join the international medical community, we are confident that their future contributions to medicine and science will further enhance Qatar’s growing global reputation as a beacon of knowledge and enlightenment.”

The convocation ceremony took place in front of several VIPs. These included Dr. Fathy Saoud, President of Qatar Foundation (QF); Mr. Faisal Al Suwaidi, President of Research and Development at QF; Dr. David Skorton, President of Cornell University; Dr. Laurie Glimcher, the Dean of Weill Cornell Medical College in New York; Dr. Antonio Gotto, former Dean of Weill Cornell Medical College in New York; and Dr. Abdul Latif Al Khal, Director of Medical Education at Hamad Medical Corporation.
Dr. Skorton said: “The accomplishments of the graduates and the bright futures that await them affirm once again the vision and wisdom of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser and the Qatar Foundation in seeing education as a pathway to creating a knowledge-based society and a better future for all.

“We are proud of the graduates and grateful for the confidence that has been placed in us and our partners in Education City.”

Dr. Glimcher told the students that throughout their careers they should always remember one point – that their patients are at the center of their work.

“With the awarding of medical degrees to the members of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar’s Class of 2012, we celebrate the achievements of these talented graduates and a decade of contribution by the college to the advancement of medical practice in the Middle East.”

She added: “We look forward to continuing to work with our partners in Qatar.”

This year’s class of 32 graduates means WCMC-Q has now created 112 new doctors since it was inaugurated at QF in 2002. Of this year’s graduates, seven were women and 25 were men.
Memories captured on film forever

Amr El Haraki and Sanabel Al-Akras make final adjustments to their appearance

Muhammad Al Nufal twirls his mortar board's tassel

Dr. David Skorton gives the students some words of wisdom

Dr. Laurie Glimcher checks that everyone is looking their best

Mouayyad Zaza adjusts his robe
Processing into the auditorium

WCMC-Q’s newest doctors walk out smiling

Hundreds of family, friends and faculty applauded as the students entered

From left: Dr. David Skorton, Dr. Laurie Glimcher and Dr. Bakr Nour

Dr. Laurie Glimcher delivers her speech

Dr. Bakr Nour, Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, holds the mace
WCMC-Q celebrated an historic milestone in February when 33 high achieving Pre-Medical students were named on the inaugural Dean’s Honors List at a ceremony in Education City.

It was the first time in the 10-year history of WCMC-Q that high achieving students were inducted to the Dean’s Honors List. Students who successfully earned a 3.75 GPA or higher in the Fall 2011 term were selected on academic merit to receive the award.

WCMC-Q Dean, Dr. Javaid Sheikh presented the awards and congratulated the students on their impressive academic achievements and he encouraged the students to continue to strive for excellence. The Dean’s Honors List reflects the high caliber of WCMC-Q’s student body and from this day forward will be a tradition that is firmly entrenched in the college.

“These young men and women have demonstrated an outstanding level of work to achieve this honor and their commitment and talent is inspiring to all at WCMC-Q. We are proud to support them and help them achieve their undoubtedly remarkable potential,” Dean Sheikh said.

Dr. Noor Suleiman, WCMC-Q Alumni of Class 2009 and currently a resident in Hamad Medical Corporation, spoke at the end of the ceremony. In her speech, she congratulated the students and encouraged them to keep up their hard work and persistence in order to achieve their dream of being great doctors.

The students who were inducted on to the Dean’s Honors List are:


Attendees at the ceremony
Women in region facing greater risk of stroke in pregnancy

Neurologists now believe that women who delay pregnancy until a later age are placing themselves at increased risk of stroke. There is emerging evidence of increased risk of stroke for pregnant women due to a higher volume of blood in the body and also due to increased risk of high blood pressure, blood clots and migraine headaches.

Speaking at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q), Neurologist-in-Chief of the Department of Neurology and Neuroscience at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York, Dr. Matthew Fink said that hormones and blood pressure fluctuate wildly in the weeks after giving birth, which may increase risk during that time.

Dr. Fink said: “The increasing prevalence of hypertension, cardiac disease, obesity and diabetes also adds to the risk of stroke for mothers, particularly as women are often getting pregnant later in life. Current medical research indicates that there is also a high prevalence of diabetes, obesity and hypertension among women in Qatar and the Middle East, making this an important issue for expectant mothers in the region.”

In the U.S., the incidence of pregnancy-associated stroke has increased dramatically over the past 15 years and a recent national study in the United States reported that rates of stroke in women during pregnancy, or soon after giving birth, have jumped an average of 54 percent in the past 12 years.

Dr. Fink said brain hemorrhages and cerebral venous thrombosis or bleeding on the brain predominate rather than ischemic stroke, which is the most common type in the elderly. An ischemic stroke occurs when an artery supplying the brain with blood becomes blocked, suddenly decreasing or stopping blood flow and ultimately causing a brain hemorrhage.

“Stroke prevention should focus on risk factor reduction, particularly hypertension, and older women should seek excellent prenatal care. Practical lifestyle changes including weight reduction, regular exercise, a healthy diet and less salt in the diet can help to lower high blood pressure. In vitro fertilization also raises a host of new questions and potential problems that require study, especially in older women,” he said.

A vision of health

A STUDENT at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) is heading to Africa to provide eye care to communities without access to medical care.

Marwa Saleh, a third-year medical student from Lebanon, has been selected to be a Global Impact Fellow with Unite For Sight in Ghana.

Traveling to Ghana on 1 October, Marwa will work with the Unite for Sight team supporting an eye clinic in a community without previous access to eye care.

Marwa said: “I’m taking a leave of absence between my third year and final year and I wanted to do something more on global health. I’ve always been interested in global health work and this is a good introduction to the basics.”

On a daily basis, she will assist local ophthalmic nurses and optometrists in all aspects of the eye care programs, including training in cultural competency, global health, social entrepreneurship, community health, volunteer ethics and professionalism, and other similar topics.

Professor Ravinder Mantani, WCMC-Q’s Associate Dean for Global and Public Health, said: “WCMC-Q is very pleased that Marwa has been selected for the Global Fellowship Unite For Sight program. Marwa is a compassionate, caring and a motivated student who will benefit greatly by participating with local health practitioners in this major global health initiative in Ghana. We are very proud of Marwa, and wish her all the best in all her future endeavors.”

Marwa is also fundraising for Unite For Sight, and 100 per cent of the funds raised will provide sight-restoring surgeries for patients living in extreme poverty. To contribute to Marwa’s fundraising efforts, email her at mas2056@qatar-med.cornell.edu.

By Richard Harris
QatarChronicle
A physician and geneticist at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar has had his research into head size published in the prestigious journal Nature Genetics.

Dr. Dennis Mook-Kanamori’s research identified genes that influence head size and are related to Parkinson’s disease and dementia. Dr. Mook-Kanamori was one of the lead authors on the paper that found three new gene variants related to the circumference of a person’s head. One of those genes was also known to be associated with both Parkinson’s and dementia.

“We know that the measurement of the circumference of the head is linked to all kinds of cognitive and neurological variability. There are a lot of diseases that come with a large or small head so we were trying to find genes that influence head size,” said Dr. Mook-Kanamori.

“In a large international collaborative effort, we measured the head circumference of 10,000 children aged 18 months old and scanned their genomes to see if there was a gene related to head size.”

The researchers involved in the study found three genes. The first two were related to adult height but the third one found was also known – from previous research – to be linked to Parkinson’s disease and dementia.

At the same time an MRI study was being conducted on intra-cranial volume (also featured in Nature Genetics). Researchers involved with that study, including Dr. Mook-Kanamori, measured the intra-cranial volume of 8,000 people and found one gene associated with it. It was the same gene linked to both head circumference and Parkinson’s.

The research sheds new light on what may cause dementia and Parkinson’s disease although Dr. Mook-Kanamori cautioned about jumping to rash conclusions.

He said: “We have to be careful as all we are showing is that this gene is related to head circumference and intra-cranial volume and other researchers have said it’s related to Parkinson’s and dementia. But you could hypothesize that this gene could somehow be a link between early head growth and neuro-degenerative diseases.”

“This gene only explains less than one percent of the variation in growth, but yes it’s exciting, there’s new biology and if we find what’s going on we could find some new pharmaceutical methods to treat Parkinson’s.

“Although it’s only responsible for a small variation in head size it still may give you an idea of why people get dementia and Parkinson’s. It’s the beginning, it’s the first step to understanding biological pathways.”

The study is the third Dr. Mook-Kanamori has been involved in which has been published in Nature Genetics. He was part of a team led by Dr. Struan F.A. Grant, Associate Director of the Center for Applied Genomics at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, which discovered two new gene variants that increase the risk of childhood obesity. That research was
published online by Nature Genetics at the beginning of April.

Dr. Mook-Kanamori said: “This was the first study looking at the genetics of childhood obesity and we found that a lot of the genes involved in adult obesity were also involved with children. However, we also found two new genes that were specifically related to childhood obesity.

“They seem to affect the gut although we don’t know for sure. The great thing is that it’s new biology.

“Now the challenge is to go into the lab and find out what these genes are really doing. That is the role for places like Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, using animal models to find out how these genes work.”

But Dr. Mook-Kanamori stressed that these genes were not the cause of childhood obesity.

“These two genes explain less than one percent of childhood obesity,” he said.

“It’s proven, it’s robust and each study showed the same but the effect is really minimal.”
Qatari nationals on the road to becoming doctors

Foundation students at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) successfully completed the first step towards a medical career when 17 of them received completion certificates at the Education City campus in May.

The WCMC-Q Foundation program is a one-year bridging course aimed at Qatari nationals who are keen to pursue a career in medicine. School leavers who show interest and intellectual promise are put through a rigorous program to improve their communication and English language skills. Faculty staff also put the students through a course in the basic sciences including biology, physics and chemistry as a preliminary to the Pre-Medical Program.

Lecturer of English for Academic Purposes Dr. Rachid Bendriss congratulated the group for completing a year of intensive study and he encouraged the students to follow their dreams with hard work and dedication. “Your energy, passion and motivation for learning will ensure that you make a success of the Pre-Medical Program and beyond,” Dr. Bendriss said.

WCMC-Q Associate Dean for Pre-Medical Education, Dr. Marco Ameduri presented students with certificates of completion and offered encouragement to continue with the intensity required to successfully pursue medical studies and become great doctors that will be an asset to the people of Qatar.

“We are celebrating the success of the academic achievements of a talented group of bright students. In just eight months of intense work and months of good learning, they have produced excellent results,” Dr. Ameduri said. He cautioned the students to remember, “Those who do not toil, do not prosper”.

“Remain focused on your ambitions and continue with your hard work. We are confident that you will do well when you leave the safe and protected rooms of the Foundation program,” Dr. Ameduri said.

Completion of the Foundation program is not a guarantee of entry to the Pre-Medical Program, however, it prepares students to improve their competency in critical areas necessary to be eligible for admission to the preliminary stages of the medical degree offered at WCMC-Q. It is aimed mainly at school leavers.
Symposium focuses on health care in the Middle East

Honored guests who attended the event include Dr. Hanan Al-Kuwari, Managing Director of HMC, who spoke about Qatar’s National Health Strategy and Dr. Mohammed Al-Thani, Director of Public Health at the Supreme Council of Health who spoke about the lessons learnt so far in injury prevention in Qatar. Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Dean of WCMC-Q, gave a presentation on improving the quality of health care in the State of Qatar, whilst Dr. Ismail Helmi, Deputy Director of Medical Education at HMC, led a panel discussion in the afternoon. This was followed by a presentation from Dr. Ibrahim Al Janahi, Senior Consultant and Head of Pediatric Pulmonology Section, and Program Director of Pediatric Residency Training Program at HMC who spoke about Pediatric Residency at HMC.

Leading health care practitioners from the United States also presented at the event such as Dr. John Norcini, President and CEO at the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) in Philadelphia, U.S., who gave a presentation titled, Achieving Optimum Health Care in Qatar: How Can it Be Done?

Finally Professor A. Donny Strosberg from the Department of Infectology, Scripps Research Institute in Florida spoke about innovative biotechnological approaches in the treatment of chronic diseases and Stephen S. Seeling, J.D., Vice President for Operations, Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) in Philadelphia, gave advice on navigating entry into US Graduate Medical Education training programs.

Applauding the large turn out for the event, Dr. Mamtani said, “Those in the health care sector can benefit from this symposium as new trends emerge in Qatar and the Middle East. Important issues health care providers need to be aware of include innovative biotechnological interventions in the treatment of chronic diseases, accreditation of health institutions, the increasing burden of obesity and non-communicable diseases and premature mortality from motor vehicle and other injuries, among other trends.”

The changing paradigm of health care in the Middle East, with a special focus on Qatar, was the subject of a symposium held by Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, and co-hosted by Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and the Supreme Council of Health in November.

The purpose of the Continuing Medical Education (CME) Symposium was to provide a platform for discussion and information exchange on health care and its priorities with a view to improve health care services in Qatar and the Middle East.

It was also an opportunity to bring together medical education professionals, research faculty, medical students, physicians and health care providers, who all benefited from the seminars and discussions. Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, Professor of Public Health and Associate Dean for Global and Public Health, organised the event with support from other faculty members at WCMC-Q.

Dr. Mamtani said, “Health care delivery continues to evolve and present challenges and opportunities worldwide, although the situation in the Middle East and in Qatar is unique and deserves special mention. Health care delivery has become multifaceted with changes in patient and health care practitioner priorities from curative care to comprehensive, evidence-based integrative and preventive approaches to disease and patient management. This changing health care paradigm presents challenges, but also offers many exciting opportunities for health care professionals.”

By Hilton Kalbe
Researchers have breakthrough on ovarian cancer treatment

Researchers at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar have made a possible advancement in the way ovarian cancer is treated. Using the latest techniques and taking a new approach involving studying a smaller sample and deeper analysis of the genetic abnormalities of the metastasized lesions, researchers found clear differences between the genetic expression of the primary ovarian cancer and the metastasized lesions.

This indicates that when treating ovarian cancer with modern medication, consideration needs to be given to how metastasized lesions respond and that may include tailoring the treatment based on combined biology of the primary ovarian cancer and metastatic lesions.

Dr. Jeremie Arash Rafii Tabrizi, Assistant Professor of Genetic Medicine in Obstetrics and Gynecology and Dr. Joel Malek, Director of the Genomics Laboratory and Instructor in Genetic Medicine, have been working closely with institutions in France, Singapore, Canada and the U.S. to produce the report. It is thought to be the first published study of its kind and appeared in PLoS ONE, the peer reviewed journal produced by the Public Library of Science.

Ovarian cancer is the sixth most common malignant cancer in women and the leading cause of death from gynecological cancer in the world. The poor overall survival rate of 20 to 30 percent at five years is due to the large tumor burden with extensive metastatic lesions of the peritoneal cavity. In other words, it often goes undetected until it has spread to other parts of the abdomen, becomes metastasized, and this aggressive form of secondary cancer is often what causes death.

“Our findings are significant and important because most patients are diagnosed at the advanced stage of the disease. This means there are metastasized lesions present in the abdomen and by studying patients whose primary ovarian cancer is very similar, we have shown that the metastasized lesions, often the most dangerous part of the disease, are different. This means they may respond differently, possibly better, to a different cancer drug,” said Dr. Rafii. “Past research has focused on the primary cancer, often looking at the genomics of hundreds of tumors. Our approach is different because we decided to focus our research on the metastasis biology rather than only on the primary tumor.”

According to Dr. Rafii the next step is to produce a larger study to confirm these findings and also to study how different the metastatic lesions are within a single patient. This could open the door to new therapeutic approaches that tailor the treatment to the biology of the metastatic lesions.

By Hilton Kolbe
A career in medicine has always been about caring for others but some doctors go beyond what is expected – plying their skills in war-torn, disaster-hit countries around the world where danger is ever-present and hope is bleak.

Just a few of those doctors attended WCMC-Q to speak about their work with international aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders).

Students heard from Michiel Hofman, who is not a doctor but is responsible for planning missions and ensuring the safety of both staff and patients, and Dr. Tankred Stobe who spoke about the difficulties in combating multiple-drug resistant tuberculosis.

Both men have travelled to some of most unstable countries in the world – Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Democratic Republic of Congo to name just a few. Despite having to cope with warring
factions and basic medical facilities and equipment, they have nonetheless helped save countless lives in countries where access to medical care was previously virtually impossible.

In an interview with the Qatar Chronicle, Dr. Stobe talked about why he left behind a comfortable, safe - and lucrative - life in a German hospital to begin work for Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in 2002. “I worked for three and a half years in hospitals,” he explained, “and I was doing more and more acute medicine but still I kept asking myself ‘is this why I studied medicine?’ and I came to realize it wasn’t.”

“I had done elective terms in Africa and India as a student so a friend suggested I apply for Medecins Sans Frontieres. It felt right and since then I’ve never stopped.”

Dr. Stobe’s first mission – the MSF term for a foreign placement - was in Thailand, although the people he was helping were actually in Myanmar.

He said: “We were working with about 10,000 people in villages across the border. Sometimes we had to walk for two days through the jungle to reach them. It was a small team but extremely interesting.”

After that came Nepal during the Maoist uprising when Dr. Stobe came face to face with a Kalashnikov-wielding Maoist commander who wanted him to “contribute” to the war effort. After great diplomacy the MSF team were allowed to carry on their way but Dr. Stobe admitted it was one of the most dangerous situations he has been in, and this from a man who was in Liberia after the civil war, Gaza in 2005 and the Somali capital Mogadishu in 2011 – all conflict zones.

As with any doctor, no matter how many patients are helped, there are always some who have particular poignancy.

For Dr. Stobe one of his was a Liberian mother who already had one young child and had just given birth to twins. “She was in the maternity ward,” he said, “and I saw her sitting on the bed in severe distress; she had pneumonia. She went into the intensive care unit and we did everything we could to save her. We were fighting for her life all night as it was clear that if she died her children would also die - that was a huge motivating force for us. She eventually pulled through and for her to survive and go home with her young family was a great joy. If we hadn’t been there and done everything we could it was clear she would have died and eventually also her children.”

On another occasion the terrible choice that people have to make while living through times of conflict and famine was driven home to him.

“In Mogadishu we had outreach teams who went into the different camps in the city,” he said. “We came across a mother with a two-year-old daughter who was so malnourished she was just skin and bones. We convinced the
MSF doctors give their pros and cons of working with the organization

**Pros**
- Job satisfaction
- Sense of purpose
- Foreign travel
- Broadening of medical knowledge

**Cons**
- Lower salary
- Long hours
- Difficulty in keeping up with medical advancements

mother to bring her to hospital and we then put her straight onto the intensive care unit. In the morning, thankfully, she was still alive. But then the mother said she wanted to take her daughter home, which was a clear death sentence for the child. I asked the mother why and she explained she had just learned her husband had died of cholera and she needed to go home to bury him.”

Realizing the mother was in an impossible situation, Dr. Stobe and his team persuaded her to leave her child with them at the clinic while she buried her husband. The mother returned a few days later and her daughter survived.

Despite living with danger on a daily basis while on missions, the fear never abates and Hofman told WCMC-Q students that if any member of the MSF team were to say they were unafraid he would send them home. What does change though, he said, is the perception of danger. Experienced staff members become accustomed to differentiating between situations that are dangerous and those that merely appear dangerous.

It is part of his role to ensure MSF staff, patients and the facilities they work in go unharmed, a difficult role when opposing sides see enemy combatants being treated by MSF doctors. Imperative to this is ensuring that everyone is aware that MSF is neutral and is purely in the country to offer medical help to everyone who needs it.

That central premise of impartiality and an adherence to the values of the Hippocratic Oath has ensured MSF is able to continue operating in places from which all others have fled and offering hope and help to those who need it.

**WCMC-Q students on MSF**

“IT’S RARE THAT WE GET TO MEET DOCTORS WHO ARE AT RIGHT AT THE HEART OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH CONFLICT. IT’S REALLY INTERESTING TO SEE WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE THEY ARE AND WHY THEY CHOOSE TO DO WHAT THEY DO. “AS A STUDENT EVERYONE CONSIDERS WORKING WITH AN AGENCY LIKE MSF BUT REALISTICALLY I’M NOT SURE. I THINK THE PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE TO BE PART OF DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS ARE PASSIONATE FOR ADVENTURE BUT YOU CAN STILL GIVE YOUR BEST IN A SAFE PLACE AND IT DOES NOT MAKE YOU LESS OF A DOCTOR. I THINK IT TAKES A CERTAIN PERSONALITY TO BE A DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS PHYSICIAN.”

Marwa Saleh, Third Year Medical Student

“TO MEET THE EPITOME OF GLOBAL MEDICINE AND SEE THE DOCTORS IN PERSON WAS AN OPPORTUNITY I DON’T THINK I COULD HAVE MISSED AND MSF IS SOMETHING I’M DEFINITELY CONSIDERING IN THE FUTURE. I’M STARTING MY RESIDENCY IN EMERGENCY MEDICINE IN A FEW MONTHS AND THE REASON I CHOSE IT IS THE WIDE VARIETY OF CASES YOU SEE AND THE NEED TO RESPOND TO DIFFERENT AGENDAS, WHICH IS WHAT MSF DOES IN WAR ZONES AND POVERTY-STRICKEN AREAS.

“EVERYONE NEEDS MEDICAL CARE, BE IT PEOPLE WHO ARE POOR OR LIVING IN STABLE AREAS BUT I FEEL THAT THE PATIENTS MSF TREATS DON’T HAVE ACCESS TO CARE AND HAVE NO-ONE TO SPEAK FOR THEM. IF WE, AS DOCTORS, CAN REACH OUT TO THEM AND HEAR THEIR NEEDS I THINK THAT IS THE NOBLES ACT A HUMAN BEING CAN DO.”

Utsav Nandi, Fourth Year Medical Student

Pros
- Job satisfaction
- Sense of purpose
- Foreign travel
- Broadening of medical knowledge

Cons
- Lower salary
- Long hours
- Difficulty in keeping up with medical advancements

MSF’s Dr. Khalid Ahmed addresses the lecture hall
Protecting a national treasure

The Arabian oryx is the iconic national symbol of Qatar. But for many years this desert antelope was on the brink of extinction. During the 1970s it was virtually extinct in the wild with the only surviving animals being found in captivity.

Today, thankfully, that situation has changed as the Qatari government specifically, along with others across the Arab world, became aware of the dire predicament of the species and took steps to protect it. Captive breeding programs coupled with reintroduction schemes have meant that recent estimates suggest there are about 1,000 individuals roaming free in the wild with a further 6,500 held in zoos or private reserves. The oryx is no longer classed as ‘endangered, but is instead ‘vulnerable’. That does not mean the animal is out of the danger zone, though, and captive breeding and reintroduction schemes will continue to play a part in the species’ recovery.

Given the symbolic role of this species as the Qatari national symbol and its importance in the region, researchers at WCMC-Q’s Genomics Core have now released data that will help ensure the survival of the oryx; they have sequenced its genome for the first time allowing breeders to match individual oryx that are as genetically different as possible. The work was carried out over a four-month period in WCMC-Q’s genomics labs in association with Qatar’s Ministry of Environment.

Dr. Joel Malek, Director of the Genomics Core, said that because of the period when the Arabian oryx population dropped so low, it was possible there would be a “bottleneck” where the genetic diversity has been lost.

Dr. Malek said: “Because the population went through such a bottleneck we need to increase genetic diversity as much as possible. You do that by testing the males and females to see which pairs will give you the most diverse
offspring. That will protect them from diseases and genetic disorders.”

The DNA used to map the genome came from an oryx kept at Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation owned by Sheikh Saoud Bin Mohammed Bin Ali Al-Thani. Blood was taken from a young male animal and the DNA extracted using, in simple terms, soap to break down the cell walls and then ethanol to precipitate the DNA out. The DNA was then broken down into billions of random fragments using focused acoustic pressure – a technique known as shotgun sequencing. The fragments were then put back together using a supercomputer, allowing Dr. Joel and his team to understand the order in which they are placed.

The team found that, as might be expected, genetic diversity within the species is relatively poor. But further research needs to be done to be sure.

Dr. Malek said: “Unfortunately we found that this oryx had low genetic diversity but further work is needed to ascertain whether this is true just for the oryx herd from which the DNA sample came or whether it is an endemic problem within the worldwide population.”

But the data that the Genomics Core arrived at predict a promising future for the Arabian oryx as breeders can select the best animals from which to breed.

Dr. Malek added: “This will be the foundation for better understanding of oryx populations and the genetic pressures that they face for their survival.

“The information we have will also hopefully be used to protect the oryx from extinction by improving existing breeding programs to produce the healthiest individuals possible.”

This in turn will ensure that future generations have the chance to see this quintessentially Qatari animal.

The information will be of equal use in other areas of research and it is already proving valuable to another team at WCMC-Q.

Dr. Benjamin Shykind, assistant professor of cell and developmental biology at WCMC-Q, is researching adaptations that make it possible for organisms to survive in desert environments.

He said: “The draft sequence of the Arabian oryx genome will be enormously useful for our study of the odorant receptor genes in desert animals. Using this sequence will allow us to begin to understand how this largest gene family in mammals has been sculpted by evolution and environment to allow the adaptation of animals to one of the harshest habitats on earth.”

Dr. Khaled Machaca, the associate dean for research at WCMC-Q, said the work on the oryx genome was highly significant.

“This is a milestone achievement for Qatar genomics research,” he said. “Qatar, through research undertaken at Qatar Foundation, is establishing an exceptional track record in terms of documenting the genetic diversity of species important for the region, starting with the date palm and now the oryx. Who knows what further excitement the future holds.”

By Richard Harris
Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, in association with the Supreme Council of Health, has launched an ambitious, long-term campaign to help improve the health of the nation.

Titled Sahtak Awalan; Your Health First, the five-year campaign aims to educate both the Qatari and expatriate communities about healthy lifestyles.

The initiative was launched by His Excellency Abdulla bin Khalid Al Qahtani, Minister of Public Health and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Health. Strategic partners in the campaign - Qatar Petroleum, Exxon Mobil, Occidental Petroleum of Qatar and Vodafone Qatar – were also at the launch.

His Excellency said that Your Health First fully supports Qatar’s National Health Strategy (NHS) 2011-2016, which aims to enhance the wellness of the people of Qatar and includes amongst its several goals preventive healthcare.

He added: “Your Health First basically targets the 10–25-year-old age group and is a perfect example of the fruitful cooperation between public and private sectors, and comes in line with the vision of SCH that the private sector is a vital partner to promote quality healthcare in Qatar.

“Your Health First is a five-year multi-stage awareness campaign, the first of which focuses on awareness and core public health concepts, especially healthy lifestyles, nutrition and health education. Initial and subsequent stages will make use of all possible media, including social networks, to reach the largest possible audience and achieve the campaign’s goals.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Dean of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, said: “WCMC-Q adopts the vision of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, and her efforts to promote education and healthcare in Qatar. Thus, we announce this initiative in cooperation with the Supreme Council of Health in
Qatar using educational strategies to promote healthy behaviour.”

“At WCMC-Q, we pledge to do our utmost to implement the different stages of Your Health First. Our academic and research staff, as well as our labs, will work towards achieving the goals of this nationwide program. Usually, people’s behavior reflects the traditional wisdom that ‘health is a crown over the head of a healthy person, only sick people see it’. We today launch a health educational program that will promote healthy behavior,” Dr. Sheikh added.

“I would like to thank H.E Abdulla Bin Khalid Al Qahtani, Minister of Public Health and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Health; Dr. Javaid Sheikh; Mr. Steve Kelly, P&GM Oxy; Mr. Ahmed Al Mawlawi, Director for Administration QP; Abdulaziz Al Talib, DGM Al Khaleej Gas; Mr. John Saad, Chief Marketing Officer Vodafone Qatar.”

This initiative includes five-minute health awareness programs to be aired on Qatar Television during the holy month of Ramadan, as well as daily health tips via Qatar Radio. WCMC-Q would like to thank senior officials at Qatar Radio and Television Corporation for their support of the campaign and Q. Media for their cooperation in this initiative.

Your Health First will also make use of digital media and social networks, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, to reach the largest number of Qatari nationals and expatriates living in the country. The program’s exclusive telecommunications partner, Vodafone Qatar, which is a joint venture between Vodafone and Qatar Foundation, will develop a bespoke application for the campaign than can be downloaded by users of smart phones. The application will provide users with updated health tips for healthy lifestyles. Vodafone Qatar will also launch an SMS campaign in support of WCMC-Q’s initiative.

During the first phase of the campaign, which runs from June 25 to December 31, 2012, a range of related awareness events will be held targeting different age groups, with a focus on children and teens. These will include the Painting a Healthy Future initiative, which aims to attract people of different ages to participate in creating a collective health-related painting which will, hopefully, break a world record and enter the Guinness Book of World Records. Be Ready for the Challenge is an interschool contest that will see schools compete to raise health awareness.

Each of the other stages of WCMC-Q’s Your Health First campaign will last for a year with a focus on two major health issues as well as public health.
Hundreds of students, their families and members of the wider community were welcomed on to the WCMC-Q campus for the fifth Medicine Unlimited recruitment fair and open day.

The interactive event, is designed to inform potential students and their parents about what a career in medicine entails and what life at WCMC-Q is like. It also offers a chance for members of the public to see what goes on at the college.

Faculty members, staff and current students were all on hand to provide information and answer any questions students and their families may have had.

The Dean of WCMC-Q, Dr. Javaid Sheikh, extended a warm welcome to the students and their families and in his address provided them with a comprehensive insight into life as a student at WCMC-Q. He shared details of the College’s six-year program of studies which leads to the M.D. degree from Cornell University and also spoke of WCMC-Q’s biomedical research program.

“WCMC-Q’s Medicine Unlimited is a wonderful opportunity for these young men and women to explore the many exciting options that a career in the fields of medicine and science can offer. WCMC-Q’s excellent program equips its students with a world-class education which can enable them to create an ambitious, fulfilling and exhilarating career,” Dr. Sheikh said.

Faculty members manned tables and introduced students to topics including internal medicine, neurology and pediatrics. Dr. Bakr Nour, Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs, provided information about organ transplantation and surgery, displaying surgical tools to illustrate his talks. On the chemistry table Senior Chemistry Lecturer Dr. Sheila Qureshi, Senior Lab Assistant Mandy Bondaruk, and Dr. Michael Pungente, Associate Professor in Organic Chemistry, used glowsticks and balloons to demonstrate the shapes of gas molecules.

Dr. Chris Triggle, Professor of Pharmacology and Assistant Dean Admissions, said: “Reaching-out to the community is one of WCMC-Q’s major objectives. By raising awareness of the young generation about medicine and the programs that WCMC-Q offers, we hope to attract more qualified prospects who are passionate about contributing to the development of Qatar’s booming healthcare system.”

There was also the chance to have basic health screenings.
courtesy of Hamad Medical Corporation and Qatar Diabetes Association, who provided tips on living a healthy lifestyle. In addition, students and visitors were able to tour WCMC-Q’s research laboratories, the first time they have been open for a Medicine Unlimited event.

One such prospective student was Dari Pass who, after more than 12 years working as a teacher, was hoping to secure a place at WCMC-Q at the age of 43. She said: "Medicine has always been my passion. I've always marveled at the new discoveries that medical practitioners make and that is something I've always wanted to be part of."

Noha Saleh, Director of Student Recruitment at WCMC-Q, explained why Medicine Unlimited is so important and what its aims are.

"This is our prime, flagship public fair," she said. "We started this annual tradition in 2008 basically to familiarize students, parents and the wider community not only with the excellent academic offerings available at WCMC-Q but also with research opportunities, great facilities as well as student life experiences.

"We also want to encourage more Qataris to consider a career in medicine. Medicine Unlimited allows potential students and their parents to discover what the Cornell degree is all about and what it involves in a fun and relaxed atmosphere."

The event also provided the opportunity to give students information about the annual essay writing competition, the winners of which will receive a scholarship to conduct research work in New York.

A quiz provided the finale to Medicine Unlimited and allowed guests to test their knowledge of what they had learned during the course of the evening.
Farewell to Frank

One of WCMC-Q’s first faculty members looks back over the last ten years as he looks forward to retirement.
When Frank Smith arrived in Doha 10 years ago, WCMC-Q did not even have a building yet.

Instead, the Professor of Chemistry in the Pre-Med Program remembers that the students and faculty were based in a wing of Qatar Academy. Since then WCMC-Q has grown into the institution we see today but Professor Smith recalls there was uncertainty as to whether the venture would succeed.

“When we first came we were not really sure how long this was going to last,” he said. “Was it going to peter out? It didn’t take very long, however, before everyone’s self-confidence in the viability of the project grew and the stability of the country and the vision of His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser came through. In the beginning we used to meet them on occasion and once you’ve spoken to the Sheikha you know that she is for real.”

In the early days of WCMC-Q there wasn’t much of a campus to speak of and certainly little for students to do. This meant that as well as being teachers, the eight or nine WCMC-Q faculty members were also playmates.

Professor Smith said: “The only other university students on the whole campus were the young women at Virginia Commonwealth. They were pretty much all Qataris and went home in the evenings so it was only our students who took part in things. There was no campus environment basically. They had no-one to play with so we played with them; volleyball, football, I played squash with them and I think I can say that no student has ever beaten me.”

One aspect of life at WCMC-Q that hasn’t changed, though, is the quality of the students although they are undoubtedly more knowledgeable about what a degree in medicine entails and more prepared for the application process.

While WCMC-Q, its courses and the students have developed, so has Qatar. For those staff members who have been in Doha for just a short while, it is incredible to believe that one could get anywhere in the city in just ten minutes ten years ago. But along with the increased traffic has come an increase in culture and an increase in leisure activities.

“In the older days life was always nice,” Professor Smith said. “It was quiet back then and you could literally get anywhere in Doha within 10 minutes. Since then the traffic has increased but now there is so much to do here: the orchestra and plays and art. The only problem is there’s just the one golf club.”

Professor Smith, who can probably lay claim to being one of the best-travelled faculty members, graduated from Bristol University in the UK and in 1963 traveled to East Africa and took a diploma in education at Makerere University, Uganda. He then taught for three years in Kenya before flying across the world to McGill University in Canada to take an MSc in Chemistry. Australia then beckoned and with it a PhD in Chemistry before he went on to the Universiti Sains Malaysia before going back to Kenya to teach at Kenyatta University. It was then back to Canada to the University of Prince Edward for two years before being appointed to Laurentian University in Ontario. Professor Smith then chose to take early retirement and came to Qatar.

“It’s been an amazing way to cap off my career,” he said. “Originally I just came here for three years but I liked it so much that I decided to stay on; I wanted to be part of this great experiment. “I actually feel that it’s been a privilege. One thing that has been nice here is that you get plenty of time to prepare your lectures and do demonstrations and I love doing demonstrations.”

Frank now plans to concentrate on kayaking and cycling in Nova Scotia, where he lives, with the possibility of consulting work for the mining industry.

By Richard Harris
Here we ask what their plans are and what they have enjoyed most about their time at the college.

_**Autumn Watts**
Lecturer and Writing Center Coordinator
Arrived: 2006

*Highlights:* So many things. I think just being exposed to a different part of the world that I knew very little about before I came here and really getting to completely explode a lot of the misconceptions and assumptions I had as a typical American. Meeting my husband was also a big highlight; I wasn’t expecting that.

Future plans: Going to Ankara to be with my husband, taking a sabbatical and working on my own writing. I have a backlog of projects. I have a novel I’m revising and also a collection of Qatari poems I’ve been working on.

_**Phyllis Griffard**
Senior Lecturer in Biology
Arrived: 2008

*Highlights:* Two things. First is that this year just as many students were accepted into Pre-Med as were accepted into medicine so it’s clear we provide very good preparation for medical school. Second, being able to come here and work with amazing people. They are highly skilled professionals, talented educators and also the most hard-working, inspiring students I will ever teach.

Future plans: Back to Houston and teaching again in some capacity. There are many opportunities out there.

_**Mary Ann Rishel**
Professor of Humanities
Arrived: 2003

*Highlights:* So many. Students, students and students. Maybe seeing the graduation of my first class, which was the class of 2010. Another highlight was seeing this building being built.

Future plans: Working on my novel, finish writing some papers I’ve started and I would also like to return in some small way to the Middle East.

_**Chris Ogden**
Senior Lecturer in Biology
Arrived: 2003

*Highlights:* The first class of doctors that we graduated in 2008. That was the beginning of the pay-off. That’s why we’re all doing this. When those kids get their degrees then we see the fruit of our labor.

Future plans: I’m going to take a year to settle things at home then see if I want to stay in Maryland.
WCMC-Q held its second Annual Research Retreat to celebrate the achievements of faculty, students and staff involved in the field of biomedical research.

The work of the college is contributing to establishing a center of excellence in biomedical research at Qatar Foundation and the Research Retreat showcased active research programs ranging from basic molecular approaches to translational and clinical projects.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Dean of WCMC-Q, opened the campus-based event on January 14, which also featured a keynote address by world-renowned expert in transplant medicine Professor Manikkam Suthanthiran. Professor Suthanthiran is the Stanton Griffis Distinguished Professor and Founding Chairman of the Department of Transplantation Medicine.

He is also the Chief of Nephrology and Hypertension at the New York Presbyterian-Weill Cornell Medical Center, which focuses on future approaches to managing transplants. Professor Suthanthiran’s address was entitled “Organ Transplantation: Reaping the Rewards of Biomedical Research”.

The goal of the WCMC-Q research program is to establish a sustainable research infrastructure that targets the most pressing health needs in Qatar, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, neuroscience and women’s health.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, Associate Dean of Research at WCMC-Q, said in his opening address: “Our goal, as set by the leadership in Qatar, is really to create a center of excellence in basic translational and biomedical research with world-class infrastructure and outstanding scientists that target the most pressing health needs of Qatar and the region. It is easy to say, but quite difficult to achieve. But we are making good progress.”

The retreat celebrated achievements in diverse fields of research, including 64 posters presented by WCMC-Q’s students and postdoctoral fellows, in addition to talks on diabetes, cancer, proteomics, metabolomics, genomics, cardiovascular diseases, ER stress and other topics presented by WCMC-Q faculty. The event created a great opportunity to foster positive interactions and collaborations among the research community in Qatar, and attracted more than 150 attendees from various stakeholders in Qatar.

*By Hilton Kolbe*
Strong winds may lift vast amounts of dust into the atmosphere but a three-year study is to investigate whether they also disturb some of the deadliest toxins known to Man. The ecology and toxins of cyanobacteria are to be studied in detail by WCMC-Q’s Assistant Professor in Biology Dr. Renee Richer in collaboration with the Institute for EthnoMedicine in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.
Cyanobacteria, sometimes known by the misnomer blue-green algae, comprise a significant portion of the photosynthetic material found in deserts but they also produce deadly toxins. Indeed, one compound produced by the organisms - anatoxin-a - is so lethal it has earned itself the nickname “Very Fast Death Factor”.

Dr. Richer’s research will form the basis for a wider, online network called TIDE (Toxins in Desert Environments) that will connect experts in a variety of fields including anthropogenic toxins such as industrial pollutants as well as natural toxins like snake and scorpion venoms.

Industrial pollutants are of a particular concern because much of the existing knowledge comes from research conducted in northern Europe and the U.S. However, this research may prove to be null and void in a country like Qatar, which does not have the same levels of rainfall that would normally wash some toxins out of the environment.

Dr. Richer said: “We see TIDE as being an interdisciplinary, online network involving biologists, chemists, zoologists, physicists etc. It will place Qatar at the center of desert toxin research and through this we may be able to identify new medicines, improve treatments and improve the education of desert-living people on potentially adverse effects on human health. “Desert ecosystems support a wide range of organisms and toxins are an adaptation of living in such an environment; because food and water is scarce organisms need to be able to defend themselves or catch prey.”

The project is being supported financially by Qatar National Research Fund, which is providing just under $1 million over three years through its National Priorities Research Program.

Dr. Richer’s work will address the health risks posed by cyanobacteria that are swept up in the dust storms that regularly affect Qatar and the wider region.

“We understand the threats of cyanobacteria toxins in food and water supplies – that is reasonably well documented – but what we don’t understand is the danger they pose when airborne,” said Dr. Richer. “We want to find out what the public health risk is and what risk dust storms may pose. Then we can suggest measures to ameliorate the effects if we find high levels of toxins in the dust.”

Cyanobacteria are one of the oldest organisms on Earth. They evolved to survive under particularly harsh conditions – environments of high salinity, extreme temperatures and low water. In a place like Qatar they don’t have to compete with plants whereas in a temperate area grasses and trees tend to dominate, driving the cyanobacteria into the soil. In Qatar and other desert environments, however, the cyanobacteria proliferate, forming large mats that look very similar to cracked mud.

Under normal circumstances the organisms pose little threat to human health but the threat they pose when in the atmosphere is unclear. However, they are unlikely to cause immediate death – although some have been classified as potential bioterrorist weapons by the military. Dr. Richer said: “Many of the toxins are slower acting – one we are looking at particularly is a slow-acting neurotoxin – so you could potentially have a cumulative effect over years to human health. However, it’s not as if you would have a dust storm and find bodies lying in the street.”

Inferences and conclusions reached through the research will be passed on to relevant agencies. At the end of the three-year program it is hoped TIDE will have formed a strong body of experts who can interact with the Qatari government and health institutes in improving public health measures.

By Hilton Kolbe
Students and staff at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) will have a smorgasbord of the finest books in English literature to feast on after 100 classic works were added to the campus library.

What started out as an idea by Professor of Neurology Basim Uthman and Associate Dean for Medical Education Lyuba Konopasek, quickly developed into an acquisition project. Information Services Librarian Sally Birch encouraged WCMC-Q colleague Assistant Professor of English, Dr. Rodney Sharkey to draw up an impressive list of classic works to enrich the learning experience of the medical students.

“One voice — most probably the angel on my shoulder — insisted on Austen’s inclusion, arguing that a list that purported to represent the best of literature could not afford to omit the iconic nineteenth century novelist. On the other hand, I found it hard to imagine the students clambering over one another at the mouth of the library to be the first to borrow Northanger Abbey. In other words, the inhabitant of my other shoulder had clearly decided that certain sacred cows needed sacrificing in order for our collection to have sufficient cachet to interest 21st century readers.”

Dr. Sharkey said it was an interesting yet challenging task and he sometimes found himself “playing devil’s advocate with my own devil” deciding on 100 classic works of literature.

The 100 literary classics was an attempt to integrate the old and the new and the books are now all available to borrow. Due to this you will find The Odyssey and the Epic of Gilgamesh standing alongside Alan Moore’s graphic novel Watchmen and Roberto Bolaño’s 2666.

“As a result, some of the crispest, clearest most simply written books in the English language are included: Hemingway’s The Old Man and the Sea, Chinua Achebe’s Things Fall Apart, J. D. Salinger’s The Catcher in the Rye, Watership Down by Richard Adams, and The Call of the Wild by Jack London. These, for me, are unforgettable childhood books, literary events that transformed my bedroom from a bland concrete box into a kaleidoscopic landscape of terror, joy and infinite possibility,” Dr. Sharkey said.

“Our hope is that as these books are borrowed and read, readers will make their own recommendations so that soon we can have 200 classics, as determined by the readership of WCMC-Q. That is a list I really look forward to reading. For my own part, the first book I borrow will be Pride and Prejudice, so that Jane Austen can put some manners on me!” Dr. Sharkey said.

By Hilton Kolbe
The international medical profession stands to gain much from the Journal, as it will provide a new portal into scientific endeavors and practical experience in public health, featuring input from the Middle East for the first time.

“As medical doctors, educators, and researchers we all stand to gain immeasurably from sharing our experiences, as well as our expertise, across borders and regions,” said Dr. Dietrich Büsselberg, Professor of Physiology and Biophysics at WCMC-Q. “For example, what practitioners and researchers learn about the treatment of diabetes here in the GCC has implications for treatment in the United States and vice versa. We all have valuable knowledge to share and this is why the Journal was created.”

Articles published in the Journal of Local and Global Health Perspectives will be of interest to all public health professionals and students, clinicians, primary care workers, health care policy planners, and researchers, as well as other professionals and students who work in any health care field. In order to broaden both professional input and access to the Journal, its creators decided to make the publication open source.

“Public health is a responsibility that is shared between medical practitioners, researchers, legislators, and the public at large. This is why we chose to make the Journal an open source journal that is available to all,” said Associate Editor Dr. Lotfi Chouchane, Professor of Genetic Medicine, Microbiology and Immunology at WCMC-Q. “Furthermore, global public health issues are rarely viewed within the local context. Through our shared publication we aim to reach the maximum number of health practitioners and public health decision makers, thereby making a real impact on public health issues and initiatives around the world,” Dr. Chouchane said.

New journal links ME medical practitioners to global best practices
Foundation students take time out at Sheikh Faisal Museum

The development of English language skills is a critical component of coursework for Foundation students at WCMC-Q and a study trip to Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al-Thani Museum provided an opportunity to use skills learned in the classroom.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, English lecturer in Pre-Medical Education, and Dr. Sheila Qureshi, senior lecturer in Chemistry, accompanied the group of students who were asked to review the museum and devise a graphic presentation of the experience.

“This was an opportunity for our students to put into practice what they have learned and to encourage language appreciation,” Dr. Bendriss said.

“For a creative writing project, students took pictures of interesting artefacts and created stories that combined history, travel, and folklore. It was a wonderful opportunity for students and me to appreciate the human experience through the museum visit.”

It was also an opportunity for the students to see exhibits of rare and valuable artefacts from the Middle East region and around the world.

Ghoroor Al Ahmed and her friend Shaikha Abdulla were surprised by the size of the museum and the variety of exhibits. Pearl diving vessels and relics of Qatari family life caught their attention as well as the large collection of artworks on display.

“This was a wonderful opportunity to learn about our country and also to see so many interesting items. There is so much to see and do,” Shaikha Abdulla said.

By Hilton Kolbe
A doctoral student at WCMC-Q won an award for her poster on breast cancer research at the Qatar International Conference on Stem Cell Science and Policy earlier this year.

Pegah Ghiabi is conducting her research under the supervision of Dr. Arash Rafii, assistant professor of genetic medicine in the Research Division at WCMC-Q.

Her research is directed towards breast cancer and the poster was titled Akt-activated Vascular Endothelial Cells Enhance Breast Cancer Stemness.

“Tumor microenvironment (niche) is where tumor cells reside, grow and in some cases metastasize,” said Ghiabi. “The niche contains several components and in this particular study, we have tried to see how endothelial lining of tumor vasculature supports breast cancer.

“To do this, we have used a genetically-modified endothelial cell line (E4ORF1) and we have assessed their role on proliferation, survival, stemness, and metastatic potential of breast cancer cells.”

The project is being funded by Qatar Foundation and Qatar National Research Fund (NPRP grant number 08-632-3-132) and will help develop the platform to study stromal/cancer cell interaction in Doha.

Breast cancer is a major disease, leading in both incidence and mortality in women. Although the mortality has been reduced by various therapy approaches, recurrence still occurs in many patients.

“Evidence suggests that tumor-initiating (cancer stem) cells may contribute to disease relapse,” said Ghiabi, “suggesting the importance of effective targeting of this cell population. Recently it has been shown that the components of the tumor microenvironment, including tumor vascular endothelium, interact with cancer stem cells through intracellular signaling pathways. However, the exact mechanism underlying this interaction is not known.

“In this study, we intend to investigate how the Akt-activated vascular endothelial cells (E4ORF1) communicate with defined populations of breast tumor. Moreover, we are interested to find out if notch pathway is regulating this crosstalk.”

Ghiabi thanked Dr. Rafii for his help and encouragement in the pursuit of her research. “Dr. Rafii has been a valuable contributor and an inspiration to my work. For this I thank him.”

Dr. Rafii said Ghiabi has been working very hard over the last two years.

“She has really become an asset to our lab,” he said. “She was able to quickly develop expertise in modeling in a 3D context in the relationship between endothelial cells and breast cancer cells. This could lead to discovering new important pathways that might be targeted therapeutically.”
Treating the mind in the Middle East

Culturally, racially, religiously and genetically are just some of the aspects in which Qatar and the wider Middle East differ from the West.

Yet the psychiatric model used to treat patients with mental health issues in the region was developed by and for a primarily Anglo-Saxon populace based in the United States and Western Europe. That means that treatments currently used in the Middle East may not be as effective as they should be. It also means that issues specifically facing people in the region may not have been taken into account when developing the Western model of psychiatric treatment.

Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar’s workshop Undergraduate Psychiatric Education in Developing Countries: Towards a more Culturally Relevant Curriculum, aimed to address the discrepancies, formulate a new model of psychiatry relevant to the Arab world and also discuss how undergraduates should be trained to best serve the mental health needs of the population.

The conference was organized and hosted by Dr. Ziad Kronfol, Professor of Psychiatry at WCMC-Q, in collaboration with the Asian Federation of Psychiatric Associations and with co-sponsorship from the World Psychiatric Association.

Dr. Kronfol said: “The point of this workshop was to come up with a psychiatric plan that is more relevant to the region. We want our doctors to be able to confidently deal with mental health issues found in this part of the world.

“We have a large immigrant population in Qatar and in the wider region there are refugees and people displaced by wars and conflicts. In other parts of Asia there are higher occurrences of natural disasters like earthquakes and...
tsunamis. The psychiatric model we import from the West does not necessarily deal with those types of problem. So we invited psychiatrists from developing and developed countries to enrich our mental health program and make it more sensitive and relevant to the inhabitants of this region.”

For Dr. Pedro Ruiz, President of the World Psychiatric Association (WPA), the Western psychiatric model currently employed is now even defunct in the countries it was created. Developed with an Anglo-Saxon population in mind, the model is of little use in the United States which is now a melting pot of nationalities. More than this, Dr. Ruiz said it would be naïve to think that a model of care could even be created for a racial group, such as Hispanics, as there are differences within the group that may mean certain treatments are not as effective.

“To think they are all the same is incorrect,” he said. “In the U.S. we even have to be careful when saying that aspirin will have the same effect on different people.

“In the Middle East there are many people who are Arabs but within that you have different ethnicities and different cultural characteristics, so we’re different, not just with culture but with metabolism too. Food is different and when you take medication the impact may be different too.

“World-wide we are not all the same, we may have similarities but people react differently to different medication.”

In all 15 experts from across the world were invited to contribute to the conference and of particular resonance for WCMC-Q was the discussion on how the curriculum should be tweaked to ensure that graduating doctors are best able to take care of their patients’ psychiatric needs.

Professor Ahmed Okasha, President of the Egyptian Psychiatric Association and a past president of the WPA, said that between 70 and 80 percent of psychiatric patients are seen by their general practitioner so it is vital that those doctors are aware of the treatments but also the cultural differences of the population they are serving.

If this can be done the huge burden placed on society due to mental health issues can be relieved.

“It is an investment for the nation to improve the mental health of its citizens, Professor Okasha said. “The best investment is to have better trained GPs and to have more training and better promotion of mental health.”

“Culture is the matrix of any education so you can’t teach students unless you assimilate their education with the local culture. In studies in the Arab world we’ve found that 70 per cent of patients attending psychiatrists have been to traditional or religious healers before coming to us. I see patients from all over the Gulf region and usually they say they have been for traditional healing before coming to you as they thought it was an evil eye or magic, both of which are firm beliefs in this culture.”

Professor Okasha said that understanding this and other local cultures was vital for a psychiatrist to be able to effectively administer to a patient.

Dr. Kronfol said that at the conference he personally learned how psychiatry was being taught in a variety of countries including the U.K., France, Thailand, Egypt and India which gave him the opportunity to compare and contrast various psychiatric teaching models.

The workshop ended with various recommendations being formulated, some universal and some specific to countries in this region.

Among the universal recommendations was the need to stress the bio-psychosocial model of mental illness and the need to assess the attitudes and skills of the medical student in addition to his/her knowledge during the psychiatric rotation.

Specific to countries with limited resources was the importance of using other methods of teaching besides lectures like videos, group work and e-learning. When manpower is limited then senior students and resident physicians could also participate in the teaching process.

By Richard Harris
Qatar Chronicle
Two Foundation students and a graduate from Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar were honored at the prestigious Annual Education Excellence Day for their high academic achievements.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, the Heir Apparent and the Chairman of the Supreme Education Council, in the presence of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chair of Qatar Foundation and Vice-Chair of the Supreme Education Council, presented 28 awards for academic excellence.

Among the winners, three from WCMC-Q were given awards during the ceremony at the Doha Convention Center. Dr. Bothina Al-Mulla of the class of 2011 won the University Student Platinum Award, Dana Al-Eshaq won the High School Platinum Award and Khalid Al-Marri won the High School Gold Award. Both Dana and Khalid are currently in the Foundation program at WCMC-Q.

For Dr. Al-Mulla, the Platinum Award was the culmination of dedication and consistent academic excellence. “It has been a wonderful experience for me and I am keen to build on my success,” she said. “I am looking forward to a successful career in medicine in the years ahead.”

The Education Excellence Day awards are regarded as the highest academic honors given to distinguished individuals and educational institutions in Qatar. There are six categories of the award, including, Outstanding PhD Holders, the Outstanding University Graduate, Outstanding High School Graduates, Outstanding School and Outstanding Teacher.

“It has been an amazing experience for me and I encourage other students to work hard at their studies because it brings rewards. We can only improve ourselves and our country by education and it is something that I always try to do,” Dana said.

Khalid Al-Marri was a school leader and high achieving student at Al Shahaniya Independent School for Boys in Doha before starting at WCMC-Q. “This award is such an honor and privilege for me and I thank all my teachers for the support they have given me over many years. I am grateful for their help and for their encouragement which has resulted in me winning this prestigious award,” Khalid said.

Education Excellence Day seeks to promote innovation and to develop a culture of excellence in Qatari society, especially in education, to improve outcomes of the educational process.

By Hilton Kolbe

Left to right: Dana Al-Eshaq, Khalid Al-Marri and Dr. Bothina Al-Mulla
Students at WCMC-Q took a break from hectic academic schedules and joined students from across Education City to focus on positive developments emerging from the turbulence in Somalia.

Somalia is a war-ravaged country that has seen more than its fair share of social and political upheaval that has left thousands of people scarred by famine and poverty. It is against this background of deprivation that students in the Global Health Club at WCMC-Q linked up with students and members of the Union of Somali Students in Qatar to organize Fiesta Somalia.

The fiesta aimed to show a brighter side to the troubled African nation often portrayed in international media as a country in political turmoil and scourged by episodes of piracy along its African coast. It was also an opportunity for students in a fortunate country like Qatar to reach out and support efforts to ease suffering and hunger in this war-ravaged country.

WCMC-Q third-year medical student Marwa Saleh, a co-founder of the Global Health Club, fellow third-year medical student Rahima Sanya and first-year medical student Mohammed Mehdi were the main organizers of the event. Marwa said the student focus on Somalia was one way of helping those less fortunate. The drought in Somalia may have eased but there were major problems, she said, and more than 200,000 people who had fled from the drought-affected areas are still living in desperate need of help.

"Donor fatigue is also a huge problem," Marwa added. "The crisis in Somalia has almost been forgotten among other disasters such as the earthquake and floods in Pakistan, the crisis in Libya and continuing events unfolding in Syria. "We have organized this event to revive support for Somalia in the hearts and minds of people and also to show them a positive outlook about Somalia."

The Fiesta Somalia stemmed from a similar grassroots program by the American Refugee Committee called I am a Star which encourages ordinary people to take action in their own communities to help Somali famine victims.

A lively group of volunteers and visitors participated in the fiesta, which was held outdoors at the WCMC-Q campus, where a variety of stalls promoted Somali handicrafts, traditional African cuisine and an exhibition of Somali landscape photographs.

All money raised was donated to the Qatar Red Crescent Society who have been sending doctors and support staff to Somalia since 2006. The WCMC-Q Global Health Club also organized a four-week series of seminars on international health issues.

Under the leadership of Dr. Ravinder Mantani, WCMC-Q Associate Dean for Global Health, the seminars introduced critical issues in global health using videos and through interactive discussion. Dr. Stephen Scott, WCMC-Q Assistant Dean for Clinical Curriculum and Medical Student Education, spoke on understanding barriers to health care in low resource settings. Assistant Professor of Genetic Medicine, Dr. Arash Rafii covered the role of NGOs in health care and students were also given an opportunity to investigate careers in global health.
Researchers from Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar were honored to win one of the five major research awards at Qatar Foundation’s Annual Research Forum.

The team of scientists from WCMC-Q collaborated on the research project into the erosion of Qatar’s barchan sand dunes with Cornell University in Ithaca, U.S. As winners of the Best Environment Research Program of the Year award, they received a grant of $100,000 to continue research efforts for their project titled *Halting the Erosion of Qatar’s Barchan Dunes: A Study on the Synergy between Ripple Motion, Moisture Retention and Microbial Growth within Barchans and How It Can Be Exploited to Stop the Erosion of an Active Dune*.

Dr. Renee Richer, Assistant Professor of Biology at WCMC-Q and a Principal Investigator said, “This was so unexpected and a tremendous achievement for our research team. It is fantastic to achieve a really big win for ecology. In the past the focus has tended to be on pollution control and when we focus on the environment it is usually on the energy sector and pollution, whereas our focus has been on basic ecology so this is a really big win for basic ecology.”

WCMC-Q’s Research Specialist, Sara Abdul Majid presented the research and was also surprised by the award but admitted that a lot of hard work and preparation went into the project. She said, “I was competing with around 12 other brilliant presenters and their research in various fields including oil, gas and energy. I was surprised and partly floundered by the number of questions I received from the audience and the judges, but I felt, overall, that the presentation went well. I was very honored to receive the large trophy and a certificate from Dr. Fathy Saoud, President of Qatar Foundation, along with an award of $US100,000 for the continuation of our research. The new funds will facilitate our analysis of microbial synergy with dune geophysics. It will also let us explore the wider dune ecology, including habitat for reptiles and their interactions with dune microbiota.”

The forum hosted more than 1,500 participants and was attended by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, Dr. Mohammad bin Saleh Al-Sada, Minister of Energy and Industry and Dr. Faleh Mohammed Hussein Ali, Assistant Secretary General for Policy of the Supreme Council of Health.

A scientific panel consisting of Nobel Laureates and international experts from relevant disciplines judged the research program abstracts presented at the forum.

Qatar National Research Fund as part of a National Priorities Research Program project funded the research. It is a three-year grant with a total budget of $US1,027,721. The project is titled *Understanding the Link Between Moisture Dynamics and Microbial Activity in Mobile Dunes*.

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**WCMC-Q’s teachers received the recognition they deserved at the Pre-Medical Faculty Teaching Award Ceremony.**

The awards, which are initiated and voted upon by students, saw certificates handed out to those who have made a lasting impression on the Pre-Med class.

The voting was based on four criteria; the teacher who had most inspired intellectual curiosity; the one from whom students had learned the most; the one who was most interested in their pupils; and the best overall teacher.

Votes were counted and the top secret results announced at a ceremony attended by WCMC-Q’s Dean, Dr. Javavid Sheikh. In the Foundation Program, Dr. Rachid Bendriss came top with students commenting how he is “so excited and enthusiastic”.

For English writing, Dr. Krystyna Golkowska collected the most votes for the way she is “always dedicated to the students, praising their essays and suggesting ways of improvement in a nice way”.

The two top teachers in 1st Year Pre-Medical were Dr. Phyllis Griffard and Dr. Laith Abu Raddad.

Dr. Griffard was praised for the way she “strives to go beyond our textbooks to see the bigger picture and to apply what we learnt to scientific topics that challenge us mentally” while Dr. Raddad earned plaudits for “knowing what confuses students and making sure they all understand the day’s topic by the end of class”.

“Making the complexities in organic chemistry seem easy by explaining and reinforcing the basic concepts,” secured 2nd Year Pre-Medical teacher Dr. Kevin Smith a top spot along with his colleague Dr. Moncef Ladjimi who one student said “is extremely passionate about biochemistry and manages to help us see the beauty and perfection in practically every aspect of the course”.

Last, but certainly not least, the Teaching Assistant award went to Andrew Flye who, it was said, “often stays late (even after 11pm) to attend to the students’ needs, dealing with more than ten students at a time the night before exams”.

Dr. Sheikh, who presented the certificates at the event, said it was testament to the teachers’ dedication that their students thought so much about them. He said: “Everyone recognizes that all faculty members at WCMC-Q are truly committed to their students but not everyone can be honored and I’m sure these particular awards have a personal significance to the winners having been voted upon by the students themselves.”

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Dr. Javavid Sheikh with, left to right, Dr. Golkowska, Dr. Griffard, Andrew Flye and Dr. Smith
A nalytical research work by three Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) students on how metals affect neurotoxicity and its implications in the human body has been published in the prestigious Journal of Toxicology.

Third-year medical students, Sanah Sadiq, Zena Ghazala and Arnab Chowdhury under the guidance of their mentor, WCMC-Q Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Dr. Dietrich Busselberg, produced a comprehensive 42-page analysis. It took the team nearly two years to complete and included research of 260 scholarly articles and papers on toxicology published over the past 40 years.

The review article was titled, Metal Toxicity at the Synapse: Presynaptic, Postsynaptic and Long Term Effects.

The Journal of Toxicology is a peer-reviewed, open access journal that publishes original research articles as well as review articles in all areas of toxicology.

Dr. Busselberg, who is also Professor of Biology and Biophysics at WCMC-Q, said it was a comprehensive paper on metal neurotoxicity. “We also looked into the presence of certain metals in the body. Some of them are important to the body while others can be harmful,” he added. “Most of the papers on this subject are very short, comprising of just a few pages. But this one has been elaborate, with all the details. The students have taken great pains researching the published articles and going through them for almost two years. It is a fabulous work with comprehensive information.”

The students explained that the research stemmed from their curiosity to discover how high concentrations of metals affect the human nerves.

“We tried to find out the effects on the central nervous system based on how metals are exposed to human nerves — whether through their concentration, route of exposure, (in vitro or in vivo), the medium used and the duration of exposure,” Sadiq said.

He said the main focus of the review was to examine the effects of metals in the central nervous system, specifically at the synapse.

“We highlighted the mechanism by which metals and their compounds interfere with the process of synaptic transmission and synaptic plasticity,” Sadiq added.

Zena Ghazala pointed out that different toxicology studies had used various methods and came out with inconsistent findings. The evidence from the research suggests that currently accepted levels for some metals are still not at safe levels as it can cause pre-term labor and adverse pregnancy outcome. The study suggests a need to re-evaluate currently accepted blood concentrations of metals, adding that exposure to different metals occurs due to industrial activities, environmental, and food chain contamination.

Dr. Busselberg said he was impressed by the high level of commitment by the students and described the efforts as an incredible level of work. “This is the first time we here at WCMC-Q have had such extensive scientific research done solely by students and I must commend them for their extraordinary work,” he said.

He said that after the work was completed by the students, it was sent to the journal publishers where it was readily accepted. There were not many problems in getting the review accepted, as it was comprehensive and informative, he added.
QMEC partners strive for excellence through medical education

Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) in association with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Sidra Medical and Research Center successfully hosted the inaugural Qatar Medical Education Conference (QMEC) 2012 at the Qatar National Convention Center in January.

The three-day conference was preceded by interactive workshops at WCMC-Q on the first day and was followed by two days of keynote lectures, workshops and meet-the-expert sessions. More than 700 delegates from around the world attended.

Under the theme “Improving the quality of care through medical education”, the conference emphasized that by enhancing medical education; it would result in improving the quality of medical care. Topics covered at the conference included international accreditation, creating curricula which address social accountability, methods for improving learning and assessment in the workplace, international certification of medical specialists, introducing institutional change, global standards and minimal requirements in program evaluation, and strategies for inter-professional teamwork.

“This is a unique gathering where we bring many of the world leaders in medical education to one place to discuss the latest developments in the field and the future of medical education in Qatar and the region,” said Dr. Abdullatif Alkhal, Deputy Chief for Medical Education at HMC.

“Qatar is leading the region in the field of medical education and what we do here will have an impact on the whole region. We are achieving several objectives from this important meeting including developing our own faculty, exchanging our experiences, learning from the leaders in education, creating strong networks, and discussing the way forward for achieving the accreditation.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Dean of WCMC-Q, said the college was delighted to collaborate with HMC and Sidra to be a partner in the 1st Qatar Medical Education Conference. “Qatar is leading the efforts in the area of healthcare education in the entire region and this conference is evidence of the effort and level of commitment that Qatar has exhibited in this regard,” Dr. Sheikh said.

“Through its national health strategy and its National Vision 2030, Qatar has very clearly delineated that it wants to improve human and social development and develop a knowledge-based society. Qatar’s health education institutions are aligning their missions with the vision for Qatar 2030.

“By creating centers of excellence in education, research and clinical training, in collaboration with our partners we will further develop a skilled biomedical workforce, thereby contributing to human development. By focusing on improving the healthcare system, we are focusing on social development. In the long run, these medical professionals and researchers will contribute to economic development and ultimately, contribute to Qatar’s realization of becoming a knowledge-based society. This conference is an important step in the attainment of this vision.”
International Year of Chemistry celebrated with symposium

Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar joined the international scientific community in celebrating the International Year of Chemistry (IYC) 2011 by hosting a Chemistry Symposium with a Chemistry in Medicine competition on November 26 at the WCMC-Q campus in Education City.

The competition was open to all schools and undergraduate colleges where chemistry is taught and the students were invited to make presentations on the role of chemistry in medicine. Students submitted a 200-250 word abstract describing the premise of their talk and WCMC-Q faculty evaluated them. Those they selected were then invited to give a five to seven-minute oral presentation based on their proposal and prizes were awarded for first, second, and third place.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, in conjunction with the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry, have designated 2011 the International Year of Chemistry. In recognition of this designation, WCMC-Q organized the chemistry-themed presentation competition.

Through their participation students learned the profound benefits that chemistry provides humankind and gained appreciation for the importance of informative speech and the elegance of the spoken word.

Senior lecturer in chemistry at WCMC-Q and the organizer of the symposium, Dr. Sheila Qureshi, said it was a memorable occasion for WCMC-Q students and the scientific community with participation from Qatar University, the College of Pharmacy and several high schools in Doha. Dr. Rodney Sharkey, a professor in the Pre-medical Program and an experienced public speaking coach, provided presentation skills sessions for those with successful submissions.

The International Year of Chemistry 2011 celebrated the achievements of chemistry and its contributions to the well being of Mankind. It also coincided with the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prize awarded to Marie Curie — an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of women to science. It was also the 100th anniversary of the founding of the International Association of Chemical Societies, providing a chance to highlight the benefits of international scientific collaboration.
Four WCMC-Q Pre-Medical students travelled to the United States for a successful series of debates under the guidance and tutelage of English professor Dr. Rodney Sharkey.

The tour saw them take part in contests at three universities and visit some US landmarks.

The first stop in the team’s tour was for the Huber Debates at the University of Vermont in Burlington, a university that has a history of debating going back 113 years.

At first the WCMC-Q students – Diala Steitieh, Lama Obeid, Afnan Al-Bahri and Risheek Kaul - were a little anxious at the prospect of having to debate their transatlantic peers from Ithaca and other North American luminaries, such as Yale. But once they settled into the five–debates–a–day schedule, the nerves vanished and a sense of competitive camaraderie emerged.

Dr. Sharkey said he was impressed by the determination of his team.

“As someone well versed in recognising the developing abilities of young novice debaters, I was delighted to see the students grow in confidence and in knowledge of implicit debate speech structure, all as the result of such intense immersion in a high intensity debate environment. I was equally pleased with their scrutiny of the final, which was contested by Cornell, Ithaca and St John’s, Queens,” Dr. Sharkey said.

From Vermont they took the bus across New York State, in the company of the Cornell University debaters, and arrived in Ithaca mid-week. Their next debating engagement was a much-anticipated return leg of the intervarsity contest between WCMC-Q and Ithaca that was first hosted in Doha two years ago. On this occasion, arguing in favour of the motion “This House supports a Two State Solution,” WCMC-Q was narrowly beaten, but nonetheless acquitted itself very well against its more experienced counterpart. What was apparent, though, was that the WCMC-Q contingent had grown in confidence and debated without fear.

Leaving Ithaca the team took the highway to New York, for their final debate at St John’s University in Queens for the final debate.

“On the bus I told the students that they were going to debate the same team that they had watched win the Vermont tournament, and there was barely a note of panic. Now the WCMC-Q debaters were focused, confident, and distinguished by a belief in themselves,” Dr. Sharkey said.

“In the final analysis, it had been a long week since four nervous students scribbled down the first motion of the Huber Debates and there and then set about preparing seven minutes speeches in 15 minutes.

“A week later on the bus to Queens, things had come full circle. Yes, the WCMC-Q students were debating the same people, but they were now coming at it from a much deeper and richer place.”
Flying kites at the Basant Festival

Zahra Kamil Faiz, Asaf Osman and Aicha Mahfoudhi with their kite

Muhammad Panhwar gets his kite off the ground

Vignesh Shanmugam and Ghaith Abu Zeinah tax their grey matter at the student chess tournament

Tariq Chukir on the ball for WCMC-Q

The WCMC-Q soccer team
Dr. Rodney Sharkey, Assistant Professor of English, lectures on Shakespeare’s Richard III

Dr. Javaid Sheikh joins in the fun as students celebrate Red Day during Wacky Week

Josia Schlogl talks about the blue swimmer crab at the Pre-Medical poster presentation

Dr. Mohamud Verjee, assistant professor of family medicine, offers advice to students during Career Night

Pancakes with maple syrup were served during the Bring Your Own Mug coffee morning
Coffee House 2012 brought out the hidden performer in WCMC-Q’s students.

Farhan Zakri struts his stuff.

Shidin Balakrishnan takes to the stage.

Ali Khairat and Eman Mosleh.

Mouayyad Zaza, Pankit Vachhani and Farhan Zakri performed in scrubs.
A wide range of acts were heard at Coffee House, which is one of the largest student events of the year.
WCMC-Q’s students are on one of the toughest degree courses at Education City – but there is always time for cricket.

Muhammad Panbwar bowls for WCMC-Q

Dhritiman Gurkha defends well

Farhan Zakri aims to bowl the batsman

Srihari Buddhavarapu looks to hit the ball for six

Prashanth Venkatesh protects his wicket

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