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Doctor honored by His Highness the Emir

A newly qualified doctor and alumna of WCM-Q has received an award from His Highness the Emir in recognition of her hard work and academic excellence.

Dr. Shaikha Al-Shokri, who graduated from WCM-Q in 2015, received the Golden Award from His Highness as part of Education Excellence Day. The event is designed to recognize key categories in the education system and to celebrate the achievements of individuals, holding them up as examples that others can follow. It also promotes a culture of excellence within the field of education.

Dr. Al-Shokri, who currently works at Hamad Medical Corporation, said it was a great honor to receive the award, particularly from His Highness the Emir.

"It was such a wonderful feeling to meet the Emir," she said. "You feel that all your years of hard work are really appreciated. His Highness encouraged us to keep the good work and told us that our country needs our expertise."

Dr. Al-Shokri is currently completing a residency in internal medicine at Hamad Hospital and said her time at WCM-Q had prepared her well for the rigors of life as a doctor.

She said: "It’s fantastic to be a resident in the hospital where you spent your time on rotation, and being familiar with the way the hospital works has been so helpful. Furthermore, the clinical and theoretical strategies and skills that we learned at WCM-Q have provided me with a great grounding upon which to build my knowledge and experience."

Dr. Stephen Scott, associate dean for student affairs at WCM-Q, said it was a pleasure to see Dr. Al-Shokri honored for her commitment to medicine.

He added: "Shaikha is a dedicated and intelligent physician with a commitment to serving others, and doctors like her have a vital role in Qatar’s future. It is gratifying to see her continued work at Hamad Hospital, helping the citizens and residents of Qatar, and making a strong contribution to the expansion of the country’s health care and knowledge-based economy."
Students convene at epilepsy training school

Students from across the world were invited to WCM-Q to learn about the symptoms, diagnosis, research and treatment of epilepsy at a four-day training school and a two-day symposium.

The International Brain Research Organization-Middle East and North Africa (IBRO-MENA) Neuroscience School brought 19 students from as far afield as Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan to WCM-Q where they joined 10 locally based students to hear lectures from expert neurologists, take part in interactive Q&A sessions and explore careers in neuroscience, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals.

The principal organizer of the event, Dr. Basim Uthman, professor of clinical neuroscience and clinical neurology at WCM-Q, was impressed by the dedication shown by the attendees. He said: “It was extremely gratifying to see so many people travel so far to attend the IBRO school and participate in interactive Q&A sessions and explore careers in neurosciences and enhance scientific progress and discoveries that will improve the quality of life of patients suffering from neurological diseases.”

Other speakers included Drs. Boulouneour Mersaoua, Gayane Melikyan, Dirk Deleu and Khalid Ibrahim from HMC, Dr. Walid Koronfoleh from Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI) and WCM-Q itself. The organizing committee of the event comprised Dr. Naim Haddad, associate professor of clinical neurology at WCM-Q, Dr. Hatem El-Shanti, scientific director at QBRI; and Dr. Uthman.

Attendee Mohamed Salam Draz is assistant lecturer of neurosurgery at Egypt’s Tanta University. He said “I am interested in epilepsy surgery and this was a great chance for me to visit Qatar and learn more about it. It was also a great chance for me to see the amazing progress that Qatar has made both in medical care and in research. Qatar has become an example for the rest of the countries in the region to aspire to.”

Fellow attendee Imen Bekri Khediri is a neurologist from Tunisia who is currently undertaking her training in France. She said: “I am currently training in neurophysiological monitoring and I have an interest in epilepsy so I was very happy to come here to learn about all the many different types of the disorder. We received very detailed information about many conditions, which has been extremely helpful.”

The symposium attracted students and medical professionals from across the MENA region.

The two-day symposium, which took place just before the training school, featured presentations from leading neurologists and opportunities for professional networking. Dr. Uthman said: “My favorite thing about IBRO is that it brings together people from all over the region to share knowledge with one another and learn about how neurological disorders are treated in many different countries. By pooling our knowledge we can help patients in many different places receive better care based on the very latest understanding of neurological disorders. "The mix of medical students, practicing medical doctors and undergraduate and graduate neuroscience researchers made the school a rich international interdisciplinary learning experience for all. We hope the IBRO-MENA neuroscience school will bolster the interest of young MENA investigators in the neurosciences and enhance scientific progress and discoveries that will improve the quality of life of patients suffering from neurological diseases.”
Insight into how fat cells multiply

Researchers at WCM-Q have made important new discoveries about how fat mass expands, which could help scientists develop new medications to combat obesity.

The research, led by WCM-Q’s Dr. Nayef Mazloum, focused on a protein known as SIRT1 that plays a key role in regulating metabolism and counteracting the complications of obesity.

Dr. Mazloum, assistant professor of research in microbiology and immunology, explained: “Clearly, if the body’s ability to properly store or burn fat is compromised, it will have a negative impact on health, leading to increased risk of diabetes, heart disease and other serious problems. For this reason we wanted to understand more about the precise mechanisms by which SIRT1 affects metabolism.”

The body accumulates fat in two different ways: by hypertrophy, whereby fat cells increase in size, and hyperplasia, in which fat cells increase in number. The role of SIRT1 is well understood in hypertrophy but not in hyperplasia, which is where Dr. Mazloum’s research was focused.

Using mice precursor fat cells with artificially lowered levels of SIRT1, the WCM-Q researchers were able to confirm that the protein does indeed play a key role in limiting accumulation of metabolically dysfunctional hyperplastic adipose (fat) cells.

Dr. Houari Abdesselem, the first author of the study and a postdoctoral associate in Dr. Mazloum’s lab said: “We observed that with lower levels of SIRT1 there was increased accumulation of metabolically dysfunctional hyperplastic adipose (fat) cells. We also analyzed the altered cellular pathways driving this process. “This research gave us a great insight into the mechanisms by which SIRT1 functions to maintain normal, healthy metabolism of fat. “With this knowledge, future research can look into developing drug therapies that mimic the function of SIRT1 to help improve metabolic function of people with obesity.”

The study has now been published in the renowned medical journal The Journal of Biological Chemistry.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q, said: “This research contributes valuable new knowledge about the metabolic mechanisms underlying obesity. This study will be of great use to the wider biomedical research community as scientists attempt to develop new therapies to tackle the global obesity epidemic, which is one of the most pressing challenges facing medicine today in Qatar and globally.”

The study, entitled ‘SIRT1 Limits Adipocyte Hyperplasia Through c-Myc Inhibition’ was aided by funding from the Biomedical Research Program (BMRP) of Qatar Foundation, which supports the research effort at WCM-Q.

Other researchers who contributed to the project were Aisha Madani, Ahmad Hani, Muna Al-Noubi, Neha Goswami, Hisham Ben-Hamidane, Anja M. Billing, Jennifer Pasquier, Najeeb Halabi, Rajaa Daloul, Mohamed Z. Sheriff, Johannes Graumann and Nasrin Mesaeli, all of WCM-Q, Michael S. Bonkowski and David A. Sinclair of the Department of Genetics at Harvard Medical School, and Mohamed ElRayess of the Life Sciences Division of the Anti-Doping Lab Qatar.
First aid training for college staff

Staff and faculty at WCM-Q learned a variety of lifesaving skills when the Hamad International Training Center (HITC) visited the college to deliver a two-day instructional program.

Sponsored by WCM-Q’s Division of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), the program consisted of eight hours of theoretical and practical instruction in essential techniques such as how to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how to use an automated external defibrillator.

The program marked the first time that HITC, which is a part of Hamad Medical Corporation, has visited the college to deliver a two-day instructional event at WCM-Q.

“During this training, our staff participated. First aid training is essential training, and I am very pleased that so many of our staff and faculty were able to participate,” said Tom Doyle, WCM-Q’s director of environmental health, safety, and security.

Tom Doyle, WCM-Q’s director of environmental health, safety, and security.

In all, 29 WCM-Q staff members completed the course. “When you consider that the chances of survival of someone who suffers a sudden cardiac arrest decreases seven to 10 percent every minute that they do not receive defibrillation, you realize that knowing these techniques can be the difference between life and death for someone in the unlikely event of an accident or emergency,” he said.

The participants learned the theory behind the techniques before trying them out in a practical session using medical mannequins. It is hoped that the program, which HITC provides in accordance with the guidelines of the European Resuscitation Council, will become a regular event at WCM-Q

“We are very fortunate that we have lots of highly trained physicians at the college who can help out if there is an emergency, but there are times when they are not around so it is important for as many staff as possible to receive training in these lifesaving techniques,” he said.

“We are extremely grateful to the Hamad International Training Center for coming to WCM-Q to deliver this essential training, and I am very pleased that so many of our staff participated.

“This training is extremely beneficial and we would like to train as many WCM-Q staff as we can,” added Tom. “It is planning to install mobile defibrillator units at strategic points around the college so it is important that people know how to use them correctly.”

Deema Al-Sheikhly, director of continuing professional development at WCM-Q, was one of the staff members who completed the course. She said: “These are really important and useful skills to know, not just for the workplace but for your personal life. Not only did we learn techniques that could save someone’s life but we were also able to eliminate some myths and discover what not to do, which in some ways is just as important.

“In my opinion, these skills are extremely necessary and important for everyone to know.”

WCM-Q is proud to have had the activities of its students celebrated with two prizes at the 4th Annual Takreem Awards, organized by Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU).

WCM-Q’s Coffee House won the Student Event of the Year award, while the Service Project or Organization award went to WCM-Q for its participation in the Reach Out To Asia (ROTA) Adult Literacy Program, which provides English language classes and social opportunities for the college’s support staff.

The Takreem Awards were created to recognize outstanding contributions by organizations and individuals to the cultural life of Education City. The awards were presented at an official ceremony held at the HBKU Student Center.

The annual Coffee House event, which is held on the front steps of the WCM-Q building and features live music and dance performances, has become one of the standout occasions in the Education City calendar. The event is open to all members of the Education City community and is organized by the WCM-Q Medical Student Executive Committee (MSEC).

MSEC members Sahar Mahadik of Med 2 (MSEC president), Priyamvada Pillai of Premed 2, and Ahmed Al Meer of Med 3 accepted the Student Event of the Year award on behalf of MSEC.

The ROTA Adult Literacy Program has been running for five years now and provides English language and computer literacy lessons for the college’s cleaners and other support staff. The program also organizes activities like football and cricket matches between the staff and students, as well as excursions and get-togethers, such as celebrating Thanksgiving. WCM-Q representatives Dr. Rodney Sharkey, associate professor of English, and Priyamvada Pillai accepted the Service Project or Organization award on behalf of MSEC.

Priyamvada Pillai said: “The cleaners and support staff have shown great enthusiasm for the program and have made good progress - from knowing little or no English, many are now at intermediate or advanced level. Before the program there wasn’t much interaction between students and the cleaners and support staff, but now there is a lot of communication going on and more of a sense of community between us, which is really positive.

“The learning goes both ways, too. As students we have had the chance to learn about different cultures and also to speak some phrases in different languages like Nepalese and Swahili, for example. We are very grateful to ROTA and to Dr. Rodney Sharkey, who is a fantastic mentor for us on this project.”
Sixteen WCM-Q students were awarded certificates in recognition of their participation in a Medical Camp that provided free health checks and medication to more than 5,000 low-income expatriates.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, presented certificates to the students at a recognition ceremony held at the college and thanked them for their dedication to the health of the community. The students each spent eight-and-a-half hours working at the Medical Camp, which took place in November 2015 and was organized jointly by the Indian Doctors Club (IDC), the Indian Islamic Association Qatar (IIAQ) and the Indian Medical Association (IMA).

Dr. Sheikh said: “Thank you to all of you for taking the time to volunteer your services so selflessly. Your contribution has made a real and very positive difference to the health of the community and we are extremely proud of you.”

The camp was held at Tariq Bin Ziyad School, New Salata and brought together physicians, paramedics, nursing staff, non-medical volunteers and students to provide a variety of health services to low-income workers. Services included general check-ups, glaucoma and audiometric tests, breast cancer screening, blood sugar checks, eye tests and distribution of free spectacles and medications, among others.

Students thanked for Medical Camp

The WCM-Q students’ participation in the Medical Camp event was coordinated by the Family Medicine Interest Group (FMIG), a student organization, with help from Dr. Mohamud Verjee, associate professor of family medicine and clinical medicine.

Second-year medical student Rula Al-Baghdadi is president of the FMIG. She said: “We felt the Medical Camp was an extremely worthwhile cause and we wanted to offer this opportunity to our members to take part in the event. As advocates for family medicine, which is strongly community-based, we feel it is very important to be involved in providing care to the community at all levels.”

First-year medical student Mona Abdelmoneim said: “It was great to see people from many different countries and cultures working together for a common cause.”

Dr. Verjee told the students: “We are very pleased to present these certificates of participation to you as thanks for your hard work and dedication to the community and the practice of family medicine.”

Certificates of Participation Recipients:

- Syeda Razia Haidar
- Fatima Al-Maadid
- Albandary Al-Qorashi
- Sara Mohamed
- Mern Hussein
- Nada Darwish
- Noor Tarifi
- Shaikha Abdullah AlQahtani
- Sruthi Suresh
- Hawra Al Lawati
- Sara Taha
- Tina Bharani
- Mona Abdelmoneim
- Adham Mushtak
- Haidar Kubba
- Tala Altaji

Dr. Mohamud Verjee and Dr. Javaid Sheikh, center, with the students who participated in the Medical Camp.
Graduation of
the Class of 2016
The Class of 2016

Mustafa Adel Abdul Karim
Ahmed Abdullah
Muhsin Ali Sabu
Ibrahim Abdul Salam Al Lawati
Maryam Al Mana
Ameen Abdulwali Al-Aghti
Nadeem Wael Al-Izaz
Ibrahim Abdul Salim Al-Emadi
Mohamed Senan Al-Habiji
Areej Al-Nabi
Moza Fadala Al-Sulaiti
Seham Mohsin Akiibi
Hebatalla Khaled Alami
Erfan Alotaki
Noor Anabtawi
Karim Bayouna
Shereen Mohamed Darwish
Danis Dias
Rana Tarek El-Maghraby
Sally Elgazar
Ahmad Tamir Hamed
Ahmed Hassib
Yasin Hussain
Navid Iqbal
Hayaa Kamran
Risheek Kaul
Perola Lamba
Noor Nima
Lama Obeid
Muhammad Siyab Parthwar
Vignesh Shanmugan
Amro Waghi Wafi
Minkyung Choi

Her Excellency Dr. Hanan Al-Kuwari, minister for public health, and Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, celebrate with the new doctors.

The 33 new doctors join the ranks of 223 other alumni of WCM-Q, who are currently working at hospitals in Qatar and around the world, curing disease and helping their fellow man. The latest graduates received their US-accredited medical degrees in front of an audience of family, faculty, staff and friends during a ceremony at Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Center at Education City.

They will now join residency programs in Qatar and the US where they will specialize in their chosen area of medicine, or take up positions in research laboratories.

“Dr. Jaevid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, paid tribute to the students. Dr. Sheikh said: “Graduation is the highlight of the academic year and it is the culmination and a celebration of everything that we strive for. It gives everyone at WCM-Q great pleasure to be able to address these young, talented people, as ‘doctor’ for the very first time.

“The Class of 2016 have demonstrated great commitment to their studies, intellectual curiosity and compassion for their patients. These qualities will continue to grow and develop as they progress through their careers and I am sure that many of them will return to Qatar to work in hospitals here, sharing their wisdom with future generations and so contributing to the knowledge-based society being created under the provisions of Qatar National Vision 2030.”

“Everyone at WCM-Q is confident that these new doctors will be wonderful ambassadors for the college and Qatar, demonstrating to the wider world that the country’s leadership is committed to excellence in education and unlocking human potential.”

Student speaker Sally Elgazar began her speech by thanking His Highness the Amir, Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani; His Highness the Father Emir, Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser, chairperson of Qatar Foundation, for their continued support. She also thanked the faculty and staff of WCM-Q, the physicians and employees of Hamad Medical Corporation and NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital and, of course, the families and friends who have supported the students through their time at WCM-Q.

She then imagined the future lives of her fellow graduates and reminded them to always keep the patient at the center of their work.

Dr. Elgazar said: “It was Ghandi who said that science without humanity is one of the seven roots of evil. Similarly, medicine without empathy is the most basic reflection of that.

“So let’s place ourselves in a patient’s shoes. Place our mothers or fathers, sons or daughters in that situation. Would we like ourselves, our parents, our children to be treated with the compassion and empathy they deserve? Or would we like our physicians to be self-involved, frowning, and glowing at us while performing the most basic service?

“If there’s anything I can guarantee, it’s that we’ll all be patients at one point or another. We’ll all need that empathy. And we’ll all have a myriad of compassionate and alternatively indifferent doctors. So be what you would prefer yourself, your parents, and your children to have.”

Watching the students receive their medical degrees and take the Hippocratic Oath were Her Excellency Dr. Hanan Al Kuwari, minister for public health, and Dr. Laurie H. Glimcher, dean of WCM-Q - New York.

Dr. Glimcher told the students to always focus on their patients and to always strive for new knowledge.

She said: “Whether you end up working at the bedside or in a lab, becoming an ophthalmologist or an orthopedic surgeon, remember that the patient is always the motivation for your efforts—and your source of inspiration.

“And as you gain specialized skills, technical expertise, and a deep base of knowledge, never stop trying new things or asking questions. Be creative in finding ways to help your patients. Set yourself on a path of discovery – to learn more about yourselves, about science and medicine, and about the world. Take the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson to heart: ‘Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail’.”

The Class of 2016
The Ministry of Public Health (MPH) and WCM-Q have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the aim of promoting healthy lifestyles, with an emphasis on healthy diets. The MoU is part of the Qatar STEPS Non-communicable Disease Risk Factors Survey 2012, which showed that the majority of adult Qataris (91 percent) consumed less than five servings of fruits and vegetables a day. This is crucial as eating healthy, balanced diets is vital for preventing diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Initial steps under the MoU include the implementation of the nutrition posters program and preparing the posters. The ministry will provide advice and guidance to Al Meera on how to implement the nutrition posters program and prepare the posters. The cooperation between MPH and the private sector will help with the implementation of the program and preparing the posters.

The MoU stipulates that MPH will set up a task force to help with preparing and revising the posters, implement the health program at workplaces, carry out a survey to assess the needs of Al Meera employees (pre-survey) and conduct health check-ups for them. The MoU also involves a mutually beneficial exchange of expertise. The MPH will provide advice to all parties concerned whenever needed, promote wellness at workplaces, and assess public health knowledge and awareness (post-survey).

WCM-Q will contribute to nutrition information of the posters in accordance with the MPH’s Qatar Dietary Guidelines and will set up a work force to help with implementing the program and preparing the posters.

Al Meera will also set up a task force that will help with implementing the nutrition posters program and promoting healthy lifestyles, will host awareness activities at suitable times and will encourage consumers to adopt healthier lifestyles.
Science and ambition at Medicine Unlimited

Four hundred middle and high school students and their parents flocked to WCM-Q to attend the college’s annual student recruitment event, Medicine Unlimited. Students and their families had the chance to tour the state-of-the-art teaching facilities at WCM-Q, meet world-class faculty, and learn about the huge variety of career opportunities open to students who study for a degree in medicine. Attendees were invited to take part in a series of interactive presentations led by the college’s faculty using lifelike mannequins and models to demonstrate medical concepts such as the anatomy and function of the human heart, how to deliver emergency care and transplant surgery, among many others.

Organized annually by WCM-Q’s Office of Student Recruitment and Outreach, the aim of the event is to provide access to prospective students, their parents and school administrators, to a real-life experience at the medical college by interacting with its faculty, researchers, students and staff. During this one-day event, participants learned more about basic sciences teaching, laboratory activities and research facilities at WCM-Q. Through interactive demonstrations and hands-on activities, the students became more aware of what it takes to become a doctor and learned about the admissions requirements.

The participation of Hamad Medical Cooperation and the Sidra Medical and Research Center also provided an excellent opportunity for the dissemination of basic health information.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, said: “Medicine Unlimited provides a unique opportunity for high school students, families, and school professionals to learn about our world-class medical program and interact with our faculty, staff, researchers, and students. It is a wonderful event that connects our college with the community to share our programs and invite students to consider medicine for their career track.

“An MD degree from WCM-Q can take a young person in so many different directions – our graduates have gone on to become surgeons, pediatricians, family physicians and biomedical researchers, among countless other roles, working in Qatar and all over the world. Medicine Unlimited gives young people a chance to explore these possibilities and it is wonderful to see the college buzzing with so much youthful energy and enthusiasm.”

The Medicine Unlimited event kicked off at the nearby Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Center, where Dr. Marco Ameduri, associate dean for premedical education, gave an address to welcome the visiting students and their families.

In addition to participating in more than 20 science activities, visitors were also able to learn more about WCM-Q’s award-winning Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First campaign, which had a booth at the event offering free dietary and exercise advice, health checks and the chance to take a spin on the ever-popular blender bikes to make a healthy fruit smoothie using only pedal power.
Research heralded as a huge advance

Research into how the body metabolizes fat and cholesterol has been named as one of the top ten most significant advances in heart disease of 2015 by the American Heart Association.

The WCM-Q research, which identified tiny particles of previously overlooked genetic material that can affect how the body deals with cholesterol and other fats, had been published in the high-impact journal *Nature Medicine*. The accolade from the American Heart Association demonstrates just how significant the research is, potentially offering doctors new avenues for treating patients with abnormal cholesterol levels.

Dr. Hani Najafi, assistant professor of cell & developmental biology at WCM-Q, initiated the research project five years ago. He said it was gratifying that research conducted in the laboratory has the potential for direct and positive impact on the lives of patients by providing new strategies on how to combat abnormal cholesterol and fat levels in the body.

Dr. Najafi said: “What one may think of as relatively insignificant can actually be of huge importance to the body and the way it reacts. This research is testament to the fact that although we are making huge advances in basic genetic research each year, we still have an awful lot to learn about its impact on medicine.”

In collaboration with other research centers including Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School and Weill Cornell Medicine in New York, Dr. Najafi examined the enormous amount of data that has been generated from genome-wide association studies (GWAS) to seek to identify and link specific genes with certain diseases. These studies have, for instance, identified genes that potentially contribute to the characteristics of conditions like high cholesterol/lipid levels, severe obesity, and other metabolic diseases. The studies take the gene sequence and look for SNPs (single-nucleotide polymorphisms). These are variations that happen within the gene sequence and some of these variations can affect the function of the gene. If there is a strong association between an SNP and a particular characteristic (phenotype) or disease, that SNP will stand out as being significant. The researcher would then identify genes that include or are close to that SNP.

But Dr. Najafi saw that alongside the protein-coding genes known as microRNAs (miRNAs) embedded within the vicinity of the SNPs, MicroRNAs are known as novel inhibitors of gene expression with an emerging role in human metabolic diseases. Dr. Najafi and his colleagues asked if the miRNAs could be playing a role and contributing to lipid abnormality. Dr. Najafi said: “We found that overall 69 miRNAs were in close proximity to the signature SNPs associated with abnormal lipid levels. More surprisingly, we saw that more than 30 different genes that have a role in lipid metabolism are potential targets of the identified miRNAs.”

The research team analyzed four microRNA candidates that regulated two major key players in lipid metabolism that prevent abnormal blood lipid levels – LDLR (low-density lipoprotein receptor) – and ABCA1. LDLR clears bad cholesterol known as LDL, whereas ABCA1 generates good cholesterol known as HDL. The collaborating team of Dr. Timothy Hla and postdoctoral fellow Yi-Chien Lu at WCMC-New York interrogated their dataset of miRNAs that interact with lipid metabolism genes and also noticed that the same miRNAs regulated the LDLR and ABCA1 in mouse macrophages. Dr. Najafi and their colleagues found that microRNAs miR-128 and miR-148a could be used as therapeutic targets by using their antisense oligonucleotides as potential lipid-lowering drugs. This would then render the miRNAs useless, essentially correcting the level of miRNAs and in turn the lipid levels.

Dr. Najafi said: “After we confirmed our discovery in human cells, we tested this in obese live mice and we saw an increase in HDL and a lowering of LDL. So this could potentially be used to alter the lipid levels in humans back into the normal range.”

“The findings are extremely valuable. They could potentially lead to new therapies for high cholesterol, helping people to avoid heart and liver diseases.”

Students’ discovery may affect diabetes medication

Research conducted by three WCM-Q medical students may have implications for diabetics and the drugs that doctors select when treating the disease.

Mu Ji Hwang, of the Class of 2018, and Haidar Kubba and Ahmed Mushannah of the Class of 2017 helped demonstrate that the diabetes drug metformin also helps protect the endothelial cells of the body’s vasculature – the network of blood vessels – from the effects of high blood glucose levels. The information is so significant that a research paper has now been published by the high-impact journal Biochemical Pharmacology.

The students were supported by WCM-Q’s Dr. Hong Ding, assistant research professor of pharmacology; Dr. Chris Triggle, professor of pharmacology; Arun Lakshaman, postdoctoral associate in pharmacology; and Suparna Ghosh, research specialist, in co-authoring the paper, entitled ‘Metformin improves endothelial function in aortic tissue and microvascular endothelial cells subjected to pro-inflammatory cytokine exposure.”

Dr. Ding, who was the corresponding author of the paper, said that the students had already been placed second in the oral presentation category of the Undergraduate Research Experience Program (UREP) for the research, but additional funding from the National Priorities Research Program had allowed them, with the support of Dr. Triggle’s laboratory, to extend the metformin data to convincingly demonstrate its protective qualities on the vasculature. This could have significant implications when doctors are selecting drugs with which to treat diabetic patients.

Dr. Ding explained: “Metformin is the first line drug used for the treatment of type 2 diabetes and is used daily by approximately 25 million people worldwide. Our results are of particular significance as although metformin remains the first choice drug for the treatment of type 2 diabetes there are many alternative recently introduced drugs that can be used. However, because of the importance of demonstrating a cardiovascular protective action for drugs used for type 2 diabetes these newly introduced drugs should be compared to metformin to determine whether they have comparable beneficial effects.

‘Such data will prove very valuable in determining the most beneficial therapeutic approaches to reducing the impact of diabetes on cardiovascular disease’.

Dr. Triggle added that he had been very impressed with the dedication of the students involved and that it was a great honor for them to have such a significant piece of research published so early on in their medical and research careers.

The full research paper can be read at www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0006295215006620.
Students present research at annual poster session

Students gained valuable experience of biomedical research when they presented the results of their biology lab projects to their peers and members of the faculty at the second annual Pre-med 1 Poster Session.

The students spent approximately a semester-and-a-half working in small groups of two and three to investigate the anti-microbial effects of various herbs and spices believed to be beneficial to health, before creating posters to present their findings at an open event.

Each group chose a number of herbs and spices and then conducted experiments to determine how far each was able to inhibit the growth of several different species of bacteria cultivated on the surface of nutrient agar in a petri dish.

The aim of the project is to provide students with the experience of conducting a real research project, beginning with the conceptualization of a research question and moving through the stages of formulating a hypothesis, designing and conducting experiments to test the hypothesis, accurately collecting and processing statistical data and then presenting the research in a public forum.

Dr. Kuei-Chiu Chen, senior lecturer in biology, said: “This project is an important step for these students who are just beginning their careers in science. They have learned a great deal about the practical process of conducting scientific research, and they have also learned a lot about taking ownership of a project and the discipline of working independently. These are crucial attributes that the students will benefit from as they develop into professional scientists.

“I am extremely impressed with the way they have risen to this challenge and the quality of the research they have presented today.”

The students presented a total of 18 posters, with projects variously investigating the antibacterial effects of coriander and garlic on the Staphylococcus aureus strain of bacteria, the effect of ginger on Corynebacteria (which can cause sore throat and diphtheria), and the antibacterial effect of thyme oil on gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria, among many other research targets.

Pre-med 1 students Ramez Bodair and Abdrahman Al-Mohamedi presented their poster on the difference between the antibacterial effect of Coffea arabica (Arabic coffee) and Amomum cardamomum (cardamom) on Corynebacteria.

Ramez said: “We decided to test the effects of both Arabic coffee and cardamom on the Corynebacterium bacterium, because it is known to cause the respiratory disease diphtheria. Arabic coffee flavored with cardamom is very widely consumed across the Middle East and North Africa so we thought it was very relevant to our region.”

The students prepared small concentrations of Arabic coffee and cardamom in 10mm discs, which they placed into plates containing agar jelly spread with Corynebacterium bacterium. These were incubated for 24 hours before the students measured the ‘inhibition zones’ around the discs where growth of the bacteria was inhibited.

The other student groups performed similar experiments with different herbs, spices and foodstuffs, ranging from oregano to grapefruit peel to basil, and investigating their effects on different strains of bacteria.

Ramez said: “Our results showed that the cardamom produced a larger inhibition zone than the Arabic coffee and we concluded that it therefore had a greater antibacterial effect on the Corynebacterium that causes diphtheria. This is good because it is widely available at low cost and we think further research could be conducted to see what other ways cardamom could be used to benefit the health of people across the MENA region.”

He added: “Conducting the research project was a really enjoyable challenge and presenting it to our fellow students and the faculty taught us a lot about communication skills and the importance of ensuring all your information is 100 per cent accurate.”
Survivors give hope to cancer patients

Students at WCM-Q have collaborated with the Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) to record the stories of cancer survivors and to publish them in an educational booklet called Story of Hope.

Story of Hope contains the stories of eight patients who were diagnosed with cancer and who survived. The patients reflect on their experiences, describe the assistance they received from the Qatar Cancer Society, and offer advice to newly diagnosed cancer patients. The project was designed as a collaborative effort between QCS and WCM-Q. QCS's goals were to continue the healing process for the cancer storytellers by allowing them to explore their feelings and emotions throughout their illness and recovery. The booklet also allows the storytellers to give back to the community by offering practical advice to new patients.

The students interviewed the patients and then wrote their stories or assisted the patients in writing their own stories. HE Sheikh Dr. Khalid Bin Labor Al Thani led the QCS team along with Dr. Mahasen Okasha, Heba Nassar, and Dana Basim Mansour. Dr. Alan Weber, associate professor of English at WCM-Q, and Ellen Sayed, director of the WCM-Q Distributed E-Library, led the college's team. Cancer researcher Dr. Jeremie Arash Rafii Tabrizi, associate professor of genetic medicine at WCM-Q, wrote a brief introduction to the booklet.

Dr. Al Thani said the project aimed to provide WCM-Q students with an insight into what cancer patients experience, and to inspire patients currently fighting the disease. He said: "Cancer is a very frightening diagnosis and patients don't always know what to expect. However, by sharing the stories of people who have beaten the disease, we can show them that there is life after cancer and that the emotions and fears they experience are universal and have been experienced by others. Essentially, I hope this booklet shows them that they are not alone."

The WCM-Q students included Mona Abdelmoneim, Abdulrahman Al-Abdulmalek, Amal Abdellatif, Hanov Ahmad, Dena Al-Dabhari, Ahmad Al-Shahari, Sulaiman Alshahadi, Nadia Darwish, Sara El Husseini, Mountain El-Tohami, Hamza Oglat, Maryam Own, Hana Purra, and Tarek Taha.

Abdulrahman Al-Abdulmalek said about the experience: "I hope this project lays the foundation for future awareness about the lives of cancer survivors. I am also hopeful that this will emphasize the importance of regular health check-ups to the public."

His colleague Maryam Own, said: "Working with my patient was inspiring and reminded me of the T.S. Eliot lines of poetry: 'Do I dare / Disturb the universe?/ In a minute there is time/ For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse'."

According to Own, these lines summed up the experiences of Umm Nasser in the booklet. "She was concerned for her children when she made the difficult decision to go abroad for medical care and she dared to face the anxieties and pain of her treatment," said Own.

Dr. Weber, one of the project leaders who teaches in the Premedical Division at WCM-Q, developed the Story of Hope as a service learning project for medical students to gain insight into the patient experience of disease.

"We are always looking for real world and hands-on learning experiences for our students in their medical education," he said. "I was very pleased with the high level of professionalism, compassion and confidentiality that the students maintained as they were mentored through the project by QCS staff and WCM-Q faculty. These are the kind of doctors that we want to see practicing in Qatar."

His colleague Ellen Sayed added: "For medical librarians it is a privilege to meet a person affected by illness face-to-face. It was humbling to hear and read the experiences shared by cancer survivors in Qatar. It brings to the forefront how important it is for those affected by illness as well as healthcare providers to have access to relevant, up-to-date health information. QCS, along with medical libraries, play a vital role in providing health information to the community at large. Making that connection early in their career is invaluable for our future physicians."
The latest developments in biomedical research were showcased as the scientific community gathered at WCM-Q for the college’s 6th Annual Research Retreat.

More than 200 leading scientists from WCM-Q and other national elite institutions convened to discuss the many pioneering research projects being conducted at the college and in collaboration with local stakeholders including Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) and Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI), which include investigations into type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and DNA analysis of the Qatari genome, among many others.

Perhaps the key theme to emerge from the Research Retreat this year was a commitment to continue WCM-Q’s drive to translate cutting-edge research into commercially valuable intellectual property (IP) that will boost Qatar’s transition to a knowledge-based economy founded on a sustainable national research and development (R&D) agenda.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q, said: “The Research Retreat is critical for the college because it really highlights the cutting-edge science that is ongoing here at all levels of our research enterprise, including faculty, post-doctoral associates, research specialists and students. This is really important for the future of scientific research in Qatar.

“We are now entering a new phase in research and development, which is very important for Qatar at the national level. In the initial phase we established a strong research program and attracted top scientists from all over the world, thanks to the generous support of Qatar Foundation and Qatar National Research Fund.

“Now it’s about using that continued support to leverage the facilities and capabilities that have been established in order to develop IP that can be the engine of the emerging knowledge-based economy of Qatar, delivering sustainable economic growth in the long-term.”

The one-day event featured presentations of cutting-edge research by six leading scientists from WCM-Q, Weill Cornell Medicine in New York and HMC. Dr. Abdul-Badi Abou-Samra, chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at HMC, spoke about collaboration between WCM-Q and HMC researchers.

Finally, presentations of important new discoveries were given by WCM-Q researchers Dr. Steven Hunt, professor of genetic medicine; Dr. Hani Najafi, assistant professor of cell and developmental biology; Dr. Karsten Suhre, professor of physiology and biophysics; Dr. Rayaz Malik, professor of medicine, with Dr. Ashfaq Shuaib, head of neuroscience at HMC, and Dr. Ronald Crystal, chair of genetic medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York.

The Research Retreat also featured a total of 84 poster presentations by research specialists, students and postdoctoral fellows explaining the findings of projects conducted at the university over the past year. The event closed with the announcement of the winners of the poster presentation in three categories.

First place in the student category was awarded jointly to second-year medical students Eman Mosleh, for her poster presentation of a project that investigated epithelial cells in relation to lung cancer, and Abdulaziz Al-Thani, for his presentation about gene therapy for peanut-induced anaphylaxis.

In the research specialists’ category Iman Al-Azwani came first with a poster about genetic profiling of the critically endangered Spix’s macaw, which is native to Brazil. In the postdoctoral fellows category, Vimal Ramachandran was first with a poster about the effect on cholesterol of a specific type of microRNA.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “I have been very impressed with the quality of the research presented here today and hugely encouraged by the appetite for inter-organizational collaboration that is in evidence.

“R&D is truly the backbone of a globally competitive, knowledge-driven economy and events such as the Research Retreat serve as a powerful vehicle for encouraging partnerships among institutions and individuals, which is so crucial for the support of innovation.”
Attracting students to WCM-Q and medicine

High school students from across Qatar spent two weeks at WCM-Q learning what life as a doctor would be like as part of a strategy designed to inspire them to take up medicine.

The Qatar Medical Explorer Winter Program has been running since 2011 and gives high school students in years 9, 10, 11 and 12 the opportunity to attend WCM-Q as a student, attending lectures, experiencing healthcare lessons and having one-on-one contact with college faculty. They also get to see the world-class facilities that are available to students at WCM-Q.

This year’s program was the biggest yet, with 33 students in attendance – 90 per cent of whom were Qataris. All the students were nominated by their schools for the explorer program based on their academic scores and interest in medicine.

Noha Saleh, director of student recruitment and outreach at WCM-Q, said the scheme was a great opportunity for interested students to learn more about a career in medicine.

She said: “The winter explorer program, like its summer counterpart, provides young people with the chance to explore the college and learn more about what the medical curriculum comprises. They have the chance to talk to faculty members about life as a doctor, but perhaps most importantly they are able to speak to our current medical students. No doubt they will explain that a medical degree is very hard work, but our students are also our greatest advocates, telling their peers of the highly rewarding nature of medicine along with the wonderful camaraderie within the college.”

The two weeks at WCM-Q included sessions about research, strategies for being accepted onto a medical degree, and time management, along with more traditional medical lectures like pharmacology and adolescent health.

WCM-Q’s Drama Club devised a play about mock interviews, which was very successful, and many of the explorer students praised Dr. Kuei Chiu Chen’s Introduction to Biology class. They also got the chance to give presentations about current medical issues such as diabetes, cancer and stroke that were judged by current medical students Zahrat Rahman and Bustrak Zakouk. The winners of the best students’ presentation were Ayah Salameh from Al Aqam Academy, Lama Al-Ghamdi from Al Wakra Secondary School for Girls, Maryam Al-Thani from Al Bayan Secondary School for Girls, and Reem Hamed from Michael E. DeBakey High School-Qatar. The topic of their presentation was about the diagnosis, cure and prevention of osteoporosis.

The explorer program also offers two distinguished awards; the first is the Excellence Award that is presented to students who demonstrated excellence, leadership and motivation throughout the program. This year’s Excellence Award went to Mahdi Salahi Mahdi and Reem Hamed, both from DeBakey.

The second award is the JO Achievement Award, which is named after Dr. Jehan Al Rayahi and Dr. Osama Al Saied, graduates of the Class of 2008 who initiated the first Summer Explorer Program back in 2008. The award is given to the students who show the most marked improvement during their participation in the program. The JO award went this year to Hussain Abdulali Hussein from DeBakey and Maryam Al Thani from Al Bayan Secondary School for Girls.

The explorer students were drawn from a variety of schools across Qatar, in addition to the schools mentioned above, students came from the Academic Bridge Program, Al Wakra Independent School for Boys, Omar bin Al Khattab Independent School for Boys, Qatar Academy, and Qatar Secondary School for Girls. In all, 20 of the attending students were girls and 13 were boys.

Law and medicine

Legal issues relating to the practice of medicine in Qatar were discussed as experts convened for the first international conference on the intersection between law and medicine to be held in Qatar.

Organized jointly by WCM-Q, Qatar University’s Schools of Law and Medicine and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), the ‘Law and Medicine: Challenging the Future’ conference explored the critical medical and legal challenges faced by medical practitioners, as well as the rights and safety of patients in the light of rapid advances in medical care, research and technology.

Hosted at Qatar University and supported by funding from Qatar National Research Fund, the conference brought together legal and healthcare experts from across the world for two days of presentations, panel discussions and networking sessions.

Speakers included Dr. Ibrahim Janahi and Dr. Michael Richmond of HMC; Dr. Marcellina Mian, professor of pediatrics and associate dean for medical education at WCM-Q; Dr. Tim McDonald and Clinton Hermes from Sidra; Dr. Humayun “Hank” Chaudhry, president and chief executive officer of the Federation of State Medical Boards of the United States; and Stephen P. Nash of Squire Patton Boggs, who delivered the keynote address.

The topics addressed by the delegates included an analysis of the existing regulatory framework for practicing medicine in Qatar and the Gulf, the liability of healthcare providers, protecting patient privacy and rights, the current legal framework for supporting innovation in healthcare delivery, and the development of a healthcare workforce for Qatar, now and for the future.

WCM-Q dean Dr. Javaid Sheikh said: “Qatar’s healthcare sector has experienced very rapid growth over the past two decades. Some of the best doctors in the world are here practicing the most up-to-date medicine with highly advanced technology. To allow this advanced healthcare to be delivered, a robust legal and regulatory framework must be in place to protect patients as well as healthcare professionals.

“As such, it is very important that academic and health care delivery institutions bring students, practitioners, policy-makers and the community at large together to promote a safe and effective healthcare environment for the public.”

Dr. Sheikh added “This conference provided an excellent opportunity to hear from some of the world’s leading experts in the legal, medical and health regulatory fields, helping us to develop and coordinate the legal and regulatory framework which best protects patients and healthcare practitioners alike.”
Leading biomedical researchers met for a two-day ‘Ion Channels and Transporters in Health and Disease’ conference organized by Professor Douglas Bovell of WCM-Q. Sixteen speakers from Qatar and the wider world presented the findings of their projects to their peers on the intricate biological processes that take place at the cellular level to cause conditions such as diabetes, brain disorders, gastrointestinal disease and heart disease.

Ion channels are proteins that form semi-permeable gateways across the cell membrane, allowing essential ions to pass in and out as and when they are needed for a variety of processes that keep the cell alive and functioning.

These tiny valve-like structures are little known to most people but are absolutely essential for the survival of virtually all life on earth. Understanding more about how these ion channels operate sheds light not only on the basic science of animal and plant cells, but also on the pathological alterations that cause disease, helping researchers develop effective new medications.

The conference was sponsored by Qatar National Research Fund’s (QNRF) Conference and Workshop Sponsorship Program (CWS), and Professor Bovell, welcoming the many talented researchers to the meeting, highlighted Qatar’s desire to develop a knowledge-based economy for the future and acknowledged QNRF and Qatar Foundation for their generous support of WCM-Q’s research activities.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean of research at WCM-Q, presented the findings of his laboratory, which focuses on calcium signaling. “The research presented by our international panel of speakers is extremely exciting with many opportunities for learning from and working with one another,” added Dr. Machaca.

Eminent scientists who spoke at the event included Professor Brian Harvey of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), who presented findings on the gender specific nature of cellular functions, and Professor Hsiao Chan of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, who spoke about the role of ion channels in insulin release in cystic fibrosis-related diabetes. Professor Deborah Iaines of St. George’s University of London highlighted a relationship between glucose concentrations and bacterial infections in the airways of diabetes sufferers, while Professor Peter McNaughton of Kings College London presented about the role of ion channels in inflammation and pain. Professor Jens Leipziger of the University of Aarhus in Denmark, presented his group’s findings on ion channels in kidney function.

Other leading researchers who presented their findings included Professor Ivana Novak of the University of Copenhagen, Professor Karl Kunzelmann of the University of Regensburg, Professor Sarah Lummis of the University of Cambridge, Dr. Raphael Courjaret, research associate at WCM-Q, Professors Dietrich Büsßelberg and Christopher Trigg of WCM-Q, Dr. Warren Thomas, also of RCSI, Dr. Fatima Maachie of the College of Pharmacy, Qatar University, and Dr. Abdellah Arredouani of the Qatar Biomedical Research Institute. The event was made possible by CWS grant 6-C-0322-15008 from the Qatar National Research Fund, itself a member of Qatar Foundation.

Professor Douglas Bovell, professor of physiology and biophysics at WCM-Q, gave the opening and closing remarks at the event.

He said: “We have learned about some excellent research that has contributed a great deal of very exciting new knowledge relating to ion channels and the role they play in a variety of debilitating diseases.

“We now look forward to building on the positive working relationships we have established with other institutions in order to pursue opportunities for collaborative research in the future.”
Music and healing

WCM-Q faculty joined with a Grammy award-nominated concert pianist to explore the relationships between art, music and medicine through a series of public performances at an event titled ‘Sound+Vision’.

Held in the cavernous Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Center Cinema, Sound+Vision featured a presentation by Professor Alan Weber, associate professor of English, on the use of music as medicine in the Islamic world as early as the 8th century, and a dramatic encounter between a doctor and a patient set to music, the dialogue of which was written and performed by Dr. Mohamud Verjee, associate professor of family medicine in clinical medicine.

Dr. Weber said: “One of the great gifts that the Islamic world has bequeathed to the modern world is an appreciation of the therapeutic qualities of music. Music therapy in the Islamic world was studied as a science and was understood to be able to soothe anxiety, reduce stress and to be beneficial for people suffering with mental illness. Today, modern scientists are rediscovering these therapeutic properties.”

Associate professor of English Dr. Rodney Sharkey, who was master of ceremonies at the event, gave a presentation titled ‘Bringing the outsider in: Pop music and identity’, which blended video clips of era-defining bands and artists, including David Bowie, with a discussion about the central role of music and literature in contemporary culture.

Dr. Sharkey said: “Music tells us about many things, about politics, about culture, about race; it informs our understanding of the world. As we saw with the outcry that followed Beyoncé’s performance at the Super Bowl, politics can often appear in pop music, and music can make an important difference to the culture we inhabit.”

Dr. Verjee’s drama described a scene in which a woman who had been unable to conceive for many years receives some life-changing news from her physician. Dr. Verjee delivered the dialogue to Rachmaninoff’s Symphony no.2, with the development of the plot synchronized with the ebb and flow of the music.

First-year medical student Abdel Aziz Al Bawab, of the Class of 2019, presented his short film of fellow students explaining what music means to them, before the event culminated with a live performance by Dutch concert pianist Vincent Corver, who played a piece he composed to celebrate the life and work of Vincent van Gogh. Entitled ‘Vincent’, the piece was commissioned by the Dutch Embassy in Doha last year to mark the 125th anniversary of van Gogh’s death. As Corver played, van Gogh’s famed Sunflowers gradually appeared on the cinema screen brushstroke by brushstroke, thanks to animation by Alex Klim.

Introducing the piece, Corver told the audience that van Gogh had struggled with depression and mental illness, and that painting had been a source of comfort to him. Corver said: “Anyone who knows his story knows the sadness behind it. His death was very tragic and if you have read articles about him you may have heard that more than 150 doctors [in our time] have tried to diagnose his illness and they came up with more than 30 diagnoses.

“So it was very sad, but what I realized is that in his life the paintings were helping him. So if [in the piece] we have a minor chord on the piano, we have a sad sounding chord, but I felt there must be a development in the music so that it starts to grow and comes to happiness. “So I hope you will hear how the music grows and how it actually finally comes back to the happiness of a major chord.”
Doctors from renowned US teaching hospitals visited WCM-Q to hear about the college’s curriculum and meet its students and faculty.

The US doctors are all responsible for residency programs in the US, and the majority of WCM-Q students apply to such residencies once they have completed their medical degree. The annual Residency Program Directors’ Symposium allows the directors to learn more about WCM-Q and also gives students the opportunity to ask questions in an informal environment, ascertaining what the directors look for when accepting students into residency programs.

This year 13 directors visited the college, most of whom had never been to Qatar before.

Dr. Andrew White, associate professor of pediatrics and director of the pediatric residency program at Washington University School of Medicine, was one of them.

Dr. White said he was very impressed both with the college and with Qatar.

He said: “The curriculum appears to be all-inclusive, challenging and innovative. It’s very similar to what we have in the US and in some aspects it’s more advanced.”

Dr. Richard Hoffman, residency program director at Chesterfield Family Medicine, which is affiliated with Virginia Commonwealth University, echoed Dr. White’s comments and said it had been an eye-opening experience for him.

Dr. Hoffman said: “Before this visit I think WCM-Q would have been considered a small medical school that I personally did not know much about and what I had heard was anecdotal. However, looking at this, your facilities are comparable to Western medical schools and the amount of work done in this short period of time has been remarkable. The amount of clinical experience open to students is really very good.”

The residency program directors spent four days in Qatar, during which they learned about WCM-Q’s curriculum, its facilities and programs. They met with the college’s student body who asked the directors about the residency programs they lead, and heard about the experience of WCM-Q alumnus Nadia Merchant, who graduated in 2011.

The US doctors also visited Hamad Medical Corporation and toured WCM-Q’s research laboratories, learning more about the college’s biomedical research program and its focus on diseases prevalent in the region.

Dr. Michael Jibson, director of psychiatry residency education at the University of Michigan, praised the universality of the research programs.

He said: “Nearly all the medical students engage in at least a brief experience of research and they clearly understand what that research is about and its wider context. That would be exceptional in the US.”

There was also praise for WCM-Q’s policy of offering third year medical students the chance to spend time at its sister campus, Weill Cornell Medicine in New York.

Dr. Jibson said that it was a “wonderful idea” and “incredibly important” particularly as WCM-Q views itself as part of the US medical education system.

Dr. Robert Rohrbaugh, residency program director for the Department of Psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine, agreed, adding: “New York exposes them to a different system of care. The schools have slightly different ways of doing things and the ability to work in that milieu is very important.”

WCM-Q’s students have an excellent record for being accepted into US residency programs. Last year, all graduates who entered the National Residency Match Program were successful. In 2014 also, 100 per cent of those who went through the match process were accepted into a US program. It is a goal of WCM-Q to have its graduates return to Qatar upon completion of their training to contribute to the growth of the country’s healthcare system in line with the standards of excellence set out in Qatar National Vision 2030 and the National Health Strategy.

Dr. Marcellina Mian, WCM-Q’s associate dean for medical education, said, therefore, that the annual visit by residency program directors was hugely beneficial as it allowed the college to showcase its curriculum, faculty, facilities, and most importantly, its students.

Dr. Mian said: “This symposium allows us to demonstrate that we are world-class and that we are producing doctors who are of the same caliber as any US medical college.”
Students launch Art and Medicine exhibition

The medical and artistic worlds collided as students of WCM-Q and Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar (VCUQatar) presented their original artworks at an exhibition that explores the intersection between art and medicine. The month-long exhibition at the Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Center showcases a collection of works created by six students from each college, utilizing a range of materials, methods and media, from laser-cut works based on medical scans, to photographs that examine the landscape as a metaphor for neurological conditions, and kinetic sculptures that question our perception of what is mental and what is physical.

The artworks and the exhibition are the result of a semester-long collaboration between VCUQatar and WCM-Q that sought to explore the many direct and abstract links that exist between art and medicine, as part of a research project conducted by Dr. Alan Weber, associate professor of English at WCM-Q; Rhys Himsworth, director of painting and printmaking at VCUQatar; Amy Andres, interim director of libraries and assistant professor at VCUQatar; and Dr. Stephen Scott, associate dean for student affairs at WCM-Q. Himsworth curated the exhibition, and an exhibition catalogue and documentary film about the project will be published shortly.

Through an Art and Medicine Learning Laboratory set up by the researchers, the project aimed to develop innovative, interdisciplinary pedagogies that will provide art students with new understandings, materials and tools to further develop their artistic practice, and which will also allow medical students to rethink medical decision-making and patient care.

The Learning Laboratory consisted of a series of workshops, seminars and lectures that investigated how each discipline solves problems, develops expertise, and utilizes creativity, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation to create new knowledge.

Dr. Weber said that the students had benefited from working with peers from a different discipline. “Clearly, art and medicine are very different disciplines involving very different modes of learning,” so the students have to move outside of their comfort zones and think creatively to develop ways to communicate and work productively with one another,” he said.

“Through this process the students gained an entirely different perspective on learning, problem-solving, teamwork and creativity, which we feel has been enormously enlightening, both for the students themselves and for us as researchers interested in pedagogical innovation.”

VCUQatar student Emelina Soares worked with WCM-Q student Yanal Shaheen to create a sculpture that explores the fragile nature of human skin. She said: “At first it was challenging to pursue a project with a medical student, since both our thoughts have complex directions in regards to rationalizing a final outcome. The medical students are trained to think structurally in order to define circumstances, while we emphasize an imaginative and conceptual approach to the world. However, the course materials gave us both the opportunity to encounter both disciplines and discover a common ground to create our final work.

“One of my main interests is the depiction of death in religious art, which has a fairly clear link to medicine and its study of human anatomy. This common interest really helped Yanal and I to develop our sculpture.”

The researchers have documented the interactions between the students through photography, videography and ethnographic-based research methodologies.

The research project is the product of collaboration and support from WCM-Q, VCUQatar, Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar Science and Technology Park, Hamad Bin Khalifa (HBKU) Student Center, Qatar Robotics Institute of Development, and the Qatar Robotic Surgery Center.

Himsworth said: “In order to understand, comment upon, and critique contemporary culture artists must use the tools of their time. These will include traditional media we associate with artistic practice but increasingly include new media such as robotics, biological materials, and computer algorithms. Interestingly, these are also areas of interest to medical practitioners and there exists a great opportunity for artists to collaborate with scientists.

“By working together in a project such as ‘Art and Medicine’ we hope that young artists are exposed to new collaborative opportunities that will allow them to create works that provide a greater understanding and more vivid account of contemporary issues.”

Professor Andres added: “We wanted to cultivate a mutually insightful, disciplinary transfer of information and ideas that would bridge the gap between the arts and sciences by bringing science directly into art and design. We strove to create scenarios in which the students from the medical sciences could bring their knowledge and skill sets to the conceptualization and design of art works. We also believed it was important to create such an opportunity in Qatar, a country that has demonstrated its commitment to education, interdisciplinary collaboration, and creative production.”

VCUQatar Student Artists
Mu Ji Hwang
Farah Al Sayyed
Faryal Malick
Rebal Turjoman
Emran Moslehi
Yanal Shaheen
WCM-Q Student Artists
Noor Al-Thani
Habees Abu-Futaim
Abdul Rahman
Mohammad Iswad
Amelie Becken
Emelina Soares
Children learn to love eating healthily

Tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, onions and a host of other fruits, vegetables and herbs have all been grown by children learning about the benefits of eating healthily, the importance of sustainability and the need to build a healthy nation.

The young students all took part in Project Greenhouse, an initiative run by the health campaign Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First, itself a program of WCM-Q. As part of the initiative schools received a greenhouse, soil, seeds and growing instructions and were challenged to cultivate the best crop. All greenhouses have now been visited and the winning children with the greenest fingers have been named as the students of Moza Bint Mohammed Independent Elementary School for Girls. Al Khor Independent Preparatory School for Girls came second, and Al Shafallah Center third.

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q, praised the children and teachers for their hard work and explained the mission of Project Greenhouse.

“Children who enjoy a balanced, healthy diet will take this into adulthood, and in turn pass it on to their own children. In this way we are able to help create a healthy future society for the benefit of Qatar. This is central to WCM-Q and Qatar Foundation who are both working towards implementing Qatar National Vision 2030.”

Project Greenhouse has allowed students to work independently and in small groups and has taught them a whole range of skills. Along with learning about healthy eating, sustainability and horticulture, the project feeds directly into classes about science, the environment and even mathematics; students at the winning school regularly measured their plants to record the growth.

Significantly, teachers have said that the children have really enjoyed the project, so they have been broadening their knowledge – as well as their diet - while having fun.

Hassan Al-Mohmedi is the director of public relations and the communications department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, a strategic partner of Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First, itself a program of WCM-Q. As part of the initiative schools received a greenhouse, soil, seeds and growing instructions and were challenged to cultivate the best crop. All greenhouses have now been visited and the winning children with the greenest fingers have been named as the students of Moza Bint Mohammed Independent Elementary School for Girls. Al Khor Independent Preparatory School for Girls came second, and Al Shafallah Center third.

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q, praised the children and teachers for their hard work and explained the mission of Project Greenhouse.

“The students of Moza Bint Mohammed Independent Elementary School have done particularly well and I am very impressed by the dedication they have shown to caring for their plants, decorating their greenhouse and learning about healthy eating. They are very worthy winners.”

Project Greenhouse is now in its third year and is constantly rolling out the program to more schools.

Shaikha Al Mansoor, the principal of Moza Bint Mohammed Independent Elementary School for Girls, said Project Greenhouse had been a great learning experience.

She said: “The students liked it because they were able to work on their own, watering the soil and growing the plants themselves. They learned that vegetables are important for a healthy life and the importance of nature and the environment. They really looked forward to the fruit and vegetables ripening.”

Mrs Al Mansoor said the project had also been a success at Moza Bint Mohammed Independent Preparatory School for Girls, of which she is also the principal, where the students and teachers made salads from the crop they grew.

At a ceremony Noura, Mariam and their classmates received a trophy to commemorate their victory.

Ablah Al-Kawari, principal of Al-Khor Independent Primary School For Girls, said: “We are thrilled to have won second place for the best crop in Project Greenhouse, part of WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan campaign. Our students benefited greatly from this fruitful project, and they are now more aware of the importance of agriculture and creating a greener Qatar. They are also keener today on eating fresh fruits and vegetables and replacing fast food with easy-to-prepare healthy and nutritious meals. We look forward to actively participating in future initiatives that raise awareness, benefit our students and nurture their extra-curricular interests.”

Mohammed Al-Sada, managing director of the Shafallah Center for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD), a member of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, stressed the importance of the center’s participation in the innovative Project Greenhouse, and commended the cooperation between SCPD, WCM-Q and its partners. Mr Al-Sada congratulated SCPD’s students for taking third place in their first participation in the competition, and applauded their determination to overcome the challenges of planting seeds and nurturing the young seedlings. He also thanked everyone involved in Project Greenhouse, which helps raise public awareness about health and sustainability, especially amongst school children, and contributes to achieving a healthier society and building new generations that adopt healthy eating habits.
Feline dissection aids research skills

Foundation students have presented some of the findings of their long-term research projects as posters at the Foundation Program Research Forum. The students spent the past four months of their biology classes learning embryology, anatomy and physiology, pathology, laboratory procedures and how to accurately record and report data by conducting dissections of feline specimens. The project culminated with a written report, from which the most interesting findings were presented in the form of posters at a public research forum held at the college. Working in pairs, the students conducted in-depth examinations of the structure of the felines and attempted to identify various pathologies to determine the conditions of each animal’s life, such as whether it had been a stray, had suffered malnutrition or mistreatment or had lived comfortably as a well-loved pet.

Students Nasser Al-Kuwari and Abdulrahman Al-Janahi presented their research, in which they discovered an accumulation of blood in the pleural cavity, the space between the chest wall and the lungs. Nasser said: “Working on a real specimen gave us a far better appreciation of anatomy than we would have got from a textbook. I also think that dissecting an animal and seeing its structure improved my understanding of human anatomy because we could compare and contrast the two.”

Abdulrahman said: “I think we also gained a lot from conducting our own investigations. Working with your hands teaches you manual dexterity and it also helps to make the information you learn more memorable because you have seen and touched it in real life.”

Other projects discovered pathologies such as a gastrointestinal blockage, the presence of helminth parasites (worms) in the stomach of the animal, and evidence of lymphadenopathy (inflamed lymph nodes). In total, 18 students presented nine research projects.

Senior lecturer in biology Dr. Clare McVeigh said: “The strength of this type of inquiry-based learning project is that it requires the students to work independently and think critically. Each specimen was different, with different pathologies, so the students had to make detailed observations and then apply their knowledge to form their own conclusions, which is very different from simply learning some information and then reproducing it at a later date.”

“It really challenged the students and they responded extremely well, which you can see by the quality of their posters.”

Teaching the young about road safety

Hundreds of children have learned more about road safety thanks to WCM-Q’s Division of Global and Public Health. Dr. Sohaila Cheema, director of global and public health, Dr. Helmat Alrouh, projects specialist and Ms. Raji Anand, administration manager in the division, participated in the 32nd GCC Traffic Week at Dari Al Saai, teaching children about the rules of the road, how to safely cross the street, the etiquette while traveling in a bus and how, by following evidence-based best practices in road safety prevention, road traffic accidents and injury can be prevented.

Using videos and interactive question and answer sessions, Dr. Cheema and Dr. Alrouh talked about the importance of seatbelts, why mobile phones should not be used while driving, and speeding among other topics. The hope is that as the children grow older and begin to drive themselves, they will remember the lessons they have learned. In addition, they will pass those lessons on to their families and friends, hopefully discouraging dangerous and anti-social driving among others.

Dr. Cheema said; “The children we have been speaking to are all aware of the problems on Qatar’s roads so we have been encouraging them to take some responsibility for their own safety. This means always putting on a seatbelt when getting into a car, sitting in the back rather than front seat, and encouraging the driver to obey road safety laws. Due to several measures taken by the government, road traffic fatality and injury rates have reduced in Qatar but there is room for further improvement. Although the children themselves aren’t driving, they can encourage their fathers, mothers and drivers to drive carefully and protect themselves, their families and other road users like pedestrians, motorcyclists and cyclists. Inculcating safe road behavior and creating awareness among children about road safety laws and safe driving culture are extremely important.”

Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, associate dean for global and public health said: “Many of the accidents and injuries happening on the roads worldwide are preventable. We all have a social responsibility to ensure that the road is a safe environment for all road users. The Division of Global and Public Health is delighted to have participated in the 32nd GCC Traffic Week. “

In all, more than 60 government departments, agencies and ministries, semi-government entities and private companies took part in Traffic Week with the aim of increasing awareness about road safety to ultimately reduce the number of accidents and road traffic injuries on Qatar’s roads.”

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Medical students at WCM-Q ‘matched’ at some of the world’s leading healthcare institutions, securing places in residency programs to continue their clinical training following graduation.

The annual Match Day event, which pairs soon-to-graduate medical students with US residency training programs, saw WCM-Q students gain positions at elite hospitals such as Cleveland Clinic, NewYork-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Match Day is highly competitive, with more than 42,000 students across the world vying for just 30,000 residency positions at US hospitals. Nineteen out of 21 WCM-Q students who applied and interviewed for residency secured a place in a program, giving a match rate of more than 90 percent.

Students and their families of the Class of 2016 attended the Match Day ceremony held at WCM-Q to hear the results of their applications soon after they were announced by the National Resident Matching Program (NRMP) in Washington, D.C.

Student Perola Lamba matched at NewYork-Presbyterian (NYP) Weill Cornell Medical Centre where she will join the internal medicine residency program. “I am absolutely delighted to be doing my residency at NYP,” she said. “It was my first choice because it is a wonderful institution but also because I have felt so at home as a member of the Cornell family for the past four years, and I want to continue to be a part of that family. I hope to one day give something back by teaching the next generation of Cornell students, and I also want to help generate new medical knowledge for our community by undertaking research.”

Match Day marks the culmination of four years of medical training for WCM-Q students, who are awarded the same US-accredited M.D. degree as graduates of Weill Cornell Medicine in New York.

Student Vignesh Shanmugam matched at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston where he will join the pathology residency program. Vignesh is the first WCM-Q student to match at Brigham and Women’s, which is affiliated with Harvard University and is regarded as one of the world’s best hospitals.

Vignesh said: “I am absolutely thrilled about starting a pathology residency training at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston. During medical school, I always enjoyed understanding the mechanisms of disease and using these insights to generate meaningful information in a clinical laboratory to guide patient care. No other specialty career option was nearly as intellectually stimulating and satisfying for me as pathology. The training program at the Brigham historically takes great pride in training the next generation of 'physician-scientists' and, given my strong passion for research, it was a perfect fit for me.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, warmly congratulated the students.

"Every member of the Class of 2016 has shown great dedication to learning their craft, and they have been justly rewarded for their efforts by securing places on some of the very best residency training programs in the world," he said.

“All of us at WCM-Q are immensely proud of their efforts and achievements, and we look forward to seeing them continue to excel as they move on to the next phase in their careers. Well done to all of you.”

Match Day success for future doctors
Twenty high school students participated in the Qatar Aspiring Doctors Program (QADP) this year, potentially preparing them for a career in medicine. The year-long program is run by WCM-Q, and is offered to a select number of high school students who are motivated to become doctors.

This year, 20 students – 17 of whom are Qatari – from a total of 12 schools took part in the QADP and received certificates to mark their participation in, or completion of, the program in a closing event at WCM-Q on April 6. Now in its second year, the program is successful in helping high school students fulfill their ambition of becoming physicians through a specially designed academic curriculum that embraces technology and a program that offers guidance on how to become a high prospect for medical colleges. The course comprises a combination of face-to-face instruction, online modules and hands-on training based on a customized timetable.

This year a total of nine participants, eight of whom are Qatari, applied to the six-year medical program. There were 13 grade-12 QADP participants, nine of whom applied, bringing the application rate from the QADP to 75 percent. Six students who are currently in grade 11 have partially completed the program and plan to apply next year.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs at WCM-Q, paid tribute to the efforts of the students.

"The QADP is a self-paced program that requires commitment and self-discipline, but with the help of our premedical faculty as well as the Office of Student Recruitment and Outreach, we provide excellent support to the students," he said. "Not only do we help talented students reach the required academic level to be college ready, we also give them the opportunity to experience life at WCM-Q. They meet faculty, students, admissions staff, and gain a real understanding of what pursuing a medical degree at WCM-Q would be like."

The QADP aims to enhance students’ college-readiness skills and strengthen their college applications. By developing the students’ areas of strength in physical sciences, biology, English and research skills - as well as enhancing their motivation to pursue medicine - the program aims to enrich the overall learning experience of the students. It does this using mastery-based and self-paced learning approaches. The program is structured so that it has inherent flexibility and takes into consideration the students’ schoolwork during this critical phase of their education. The program also offers ACT preparation, an important admissions requirement, as well as year-long access to faculty, teaching assistants and staff in addition to the use of the excellent facilities at WCM-Q.

Haya Rashid Al Kaabi, of Al Bayan Independent School for Girls, was one of those who took part in the QADP. Haya, recipient of the Completion with Honors Award, spoke at the event and said that joining the QADP was one of the “best decisions of my life”.

She said: “It’s given me an insight into life as a college student and I’m not even at college yet. This program gave me a lot of experience and tons of valuable information that will help me not only in college but in life too.”

Hassan Alroobi, from Omar Bin Khattab Secondary School for Boys, added that not only has the QADP improved his academic knowledge, it has also taught him how to think differently, and perhaps most importantly, improved his confidence and strengthened his motivation to become a doctor. He added: “I learned to work hard to be good, then to work hard to be better, then to work hard to be the best.”

The QADP runs from September to April each academic year. To join the program, interested students must first be nominated by their high schools. Inclusion in the QADP is based purely on merit, and those selected must have excellent academic scores and have demonstrated a strong desire to become a doctor.

The 12 schools from which this year’s students came are Al Arqam Academy, Al Eiman Independent School for Girls, Al Bayan Independent School for Girls, Al Jazeera Academy, Al Wakra Independent School for Boys and Girls, Aminna Bint Wahab Independent School for Boys, Doha College, Omar Bin Khattab School for Boys, Qatar Independent School, Rabaa Al Adweya Independent School for Girls, Qatar International School, and Rowda Bint Jassim Independent School for Girls.

Information about the QADP is available at WCM-Q’s Office of Student Recruitment and Outreach at www.qatar-weill.cornell.edu/future-students.
The Yalla Natural roadshow once again took part in Qatar International Food Festival, showing thousands of visitors that healthy food can still taste great.

The roadshow is part of the Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First campaign that is run by WCM-Q in participation with the Ministry for Public Health. Yalla Natural aims to encourage families and children to get back to basics, using fresh, organic food, taking regular exercise and maybe even growing their own fruit and vegetables.

To help encourage them, the Yalla Natural truck is fitted out with lots of activities for all the family, including a planting desk where families can plant their own vegetable seeds to take home, cookery demonstrations, a healthy recipe wall, from which people can choose recipes to cook at home, and the famous blender bikes, where visitors are able to make their own delicious, healthy smoothies while exercising.

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q, said Yalla Natural - and the wider Sahtak Awalan campaign – is aimed at improving the health of the whole community. She said: “Through Yalla Natural we strive to engage with everyone in the community and give them the knowledge they need to protect their own health and the health of their family.

Back to basics with Yalla Natural

The Qatar International Food Festival is a great opportunity to reach out to people and advise them about healthy lifestyles, as good health is one of the core tenets of Qatar National Vision 2030."

One of the star attractions of the Yalla Natural roadshow was Chef Eric Cousin, corporate executive chef at AMLAK, who demonstrated how to cook quick, healthy and tasty meals, before offering visitors a sample of the finished dish. Chef Eric also oversees Chef’s Garden, the first farm-to-table restaurant in Qatar.

Chef Eric said: “As always, it is a great privilege to work with Sahtak Awalan and be able to show people that you can make great tasting food in minutes – and that it can be extremely healthy. There is too great a reliance on convenient, pre-packaged food but I have been able to show people that food can be nutritious and tastes better than anything you can take out of a packet yet does not always involve a long preparation process.”

Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First was launched in 2012 in association with the Ministry of Public Health and the campaign’s strategic partners, Qatar Foundation, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Occidental Petroleum Qatar, ExxonMobil and Qatar Olympic Committee.
New medical interpreters honored at WCM-Q ceremony

Certificates have been presented to a new cohort of interpreters to mark their completion of the Bridging the Gap medical interpreter training program. The program, which is run by WCM-Q’s Center for Cultural Competence in Health Care (CCCHC), equips multilingual graduates with the specialist skills needed to facilitate communication between patients and healthcare professionals.

In a diverse, multicultural and multilingual society like Qatar’s, medical interpretation is a vital tool for ensuring correct diagnosis and effective treatment for patients. To recognize the importance of their contribution, certificates were presented to the 37 candidates who completed the program in April and November 2015 at a special ceremony held at WCM-Q by the CCCHC, which is part of WCM-Q’s Global & Public Health Division.

Maha Elnashar, director of the CCCHC, said: “We are extremely happy to present our candidates with certificates to recognize their dedication and hard work on the Bridging the Gap course. All of our interpreters generously give up their time to offer their skills to help people in our community communicate effectively to access the healthcare they need. This is so important in Qatar’s highly diverse community.”

The Bridging the Gap program is an intensive 40-hour course consisting of multiple interactive exercises delivered over five days by Ms. Elnashar and Huda Abdelrahim, senior specialist in cultural competence. The program teaches candidates specialist medical terminology, a medical interpreter’s code of ethics, special interpretive techniques for the medical setting, and the impact of cultural values on medical interpretation.

All candidates are bilingual or multilingual graduates who are selected based on specific criteria and have to pass assessment tests and a personal interview to participate in the course. To date, the CCCHC has trained 147 medical interpreters since 2012, of which 132 currently reside in Doha. Together, Bridging the Gap interpreters are proficient in 20 languages: Arabic, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, Nepali, Urdu, Tagalog, Bengali, German, French, Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Romanian, Amharic, Punjabi, Farsi, Sinhalese, Tigrinya and Telugu.

Certificate recipient Moustafa Khalifa is a professional Arabic-English translator who works for the Ministry of Finance. He completed the Bridging the Gap program in November 2015.

Moustafa said: “I have always been interested in medicine and I wanted to make a positive contribution to the community in Qatar, so the Bridging the Gap program was a wonderful opportunity for me to combine the two.

“I found the training extremely useful and effective, especially as it was interactive so that we had a chance to try out the new skills as we learned them. I have learned a great deal of new knowledge, multiple techniques and a wide range of protocols related to the medical field.”

Ms. Abdelrahim added: “We are very fortunate to have a highly qualified team, forming a multi-professional, collaborative paradigm which includes physicians, nurses, translators, legal advisors, IT professionals, business professionals, pharmacists, dieticians, lab technicians, teachers, administrators, accountants and more, working with us as medical interpreters to help improve the health of the community here in Qatar, by bridging the language barriers.”

Dr. Shaqayeq Keyvan, who completed the course, said: “Bridging the Gap is vital because it takes trained medical interpreters to achieve medical accuracy and cultural sensitivity in interactions between doctors and patients, and these are prerequisites for the effective delivery and receipt of healthcare.

“I am very grateful to have received this important training in such a friendly environment from the Bridging the Gap team.”

Dr. Ravinder Mamanti, associate dean for global and public health, said: “In the healthcare environment, effective communication is essential for ensuring patients receive the correct treatment, so in a multicultural, multilingual country such as Qatar, medical interpreters are incredibly important.

“I am very happy to see so many new medical interpreters have completed the Bridging the Gap program and offer my warmest congratulations to all 37 of them. I have no doubt that they will make a wonderful contribution to the health and wellbeing of patients from all over the world who receive treatment here in Qatar.”
Foundation and Premedical students reaped the rewards of their hard work as they celebrated the successful completion of their courses with a ceremony at Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Center.

Before an audience of their peers, friends and family, plus WCM-Q staff and faculty, certificates of completion were presented to an ebullient group of 18 Foundation and 40 Premedical students.

Following a recitation from the Holy Qur’an by Foundation student Nasser Al-Kuwari, Dr. Kevin Smith, assistant dean for premedical education, used his welcome address to reflect upon the personal development of each student. He said: “I want you all to take a moment to think about just how far you have come and how much you have learned in so short a time. You have accomplished something great and overcome many challenges, and in doing so each of you has grown and developed enormously. We are very proud of all of you.”

The students of the Foundation Program, 17 of whom are Qatari nationals, completed a year of intensive study in mathematics, the basic sciences and English to prepare them for the rigors of WCM-Q’s six-year integrated Medical Program.

Meanwhile, the students of the Premedical Program followed a two-year curriculum that forms the first part of the six-year integrated program and consists of study of advanced material in the sciences, mathematics and English, plus courses in neuroscience, psychology, medical ethics, immunology and human genetics, among other subjects.

Giving the student address, Adam Larson, lecturer in English, said: “Over the last few years, you have developed lasting relationships with your teachers and classmates; people you need to trust and who trust in you. Someday in the not too distant future you will have patients of your own who will trust you with their lives and the lives of their loved ones. By listening to their stories, by fostering trusting relationships, by healing others, you have the opportunity to be part of something greater than yourselves. I offer you my best wishes for your happiness and success.”

Student speakers Haya Al-Taweel of the Foundation class and Nasser Binmarzook of the Premedical class then gave speeches thanking their classmates, loved ones and professors for supporting them during their studies. Nasser said: “We have overcome many obstacles together and at every moment that we could have given up we didn’t – we were able to continue working hard because we were constantly being supported by the people who care about us. We are very grateful for that support.”

Dr. Smith and Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, then invited each of the students to the stage to receive their certificates of completion, to whoops of appreciation and applause from the audience.

Premedical student Menatalla Mekhaimar said: “It has been a tough but really amazing two years. We have learned so much and at the same time I have been able to meet people from all over the world. I have always loved science and the Premed Program really helped me to work out that a career in science and medicine is truly what I want to do with my life. “I’m now really looking forward to going on to the next step towards getting my M.D. degree.”

Foundation Students

Premedical Students

Hard work pays off for students
Students inspired to live healthy lives

Hundreds of children have been inspired to research healthy lifestyles and spread the word among their friends through the Sahtak Awalan Poster Competition. The annual competition is part of WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First campaign. This year 33 schools from across Qatar and hundreds of children created around 400 health-related posters. Faculty and experts from WCM-Q and the Ministry of Health have now judged the 10 top posters from the nine winning schools. Of these the top three were Salah Eddeen Al Ayoubi Independent Preparatory School for Boys who came first, Al Shahaniya Preparatory Secondary School for Boys were in second place, and Osama Bin Zaid Independent School for Boys came third. The children who created the top 10 posters all received a bicycle as a prize.

The aim of the competition was to encourage young people to take responsibility for their own learning, to understand positive health behaviors and to spread that knowledge among their peers.

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q, said the standard of posters and the range of subjects were excellent. She said: “All of these young people have excelled themselves. The creativity and thirst for knowledge are amazing and I would like to congratulate each and every one of them along with their teachers. These are the future leaders of Qatar and they now have a deep understanding of how to keep their mind and body fit and healthy. It is a great teaching tool. We used the posters as a strategy for teaching science and biology units like healthy food. Some students made posters with the help of their families and the head teacher, Hassan Al Hababi, was very interested in this and encouraged every student to take part.”

Other poster topics included road safety, physical exercise, sugary drinks, traffic accidents, nutrition and vitamin D. Faleh Zayed, 14, and Mohammed Shaban, 14, of Al Shahaniya Boys School researched road accidents for their poster. They said: “There are too many accidents in the country and people are suffering. We want to tell people not to drive fast, to use their seatbelts and to concentrate on driving, not, for example, using their phone.”

Grade 8 student Ghada Ehab, 13, of Hammad International Development School, created a poster about hidden sugar in food and drink. She said: “Now a lot of people have obesity and diabetes so people have to take care of their health by watching the amount of sugar they eat. Sugar is hidden in things like ketchup, fruit juices and biscuits and lots of other things. You have to always check the label to know how much sugar there is.”

The names of all the schools who participated in the competition are: Osama Bin Zaid Independent for Boys; Audio–Complex Center for Girls; Aman Bint Wahab Independent School for Girls; Audio–Complex Center for Boys; Ali Bin Al Taleb Independent Preparatory School for Boys; Salah Eddeen Al Ayoubi Independent Preparatory School for Boys; Hanzra Bin Abdel Mouttalb Independent Preparatory School for Boys; Messeied Independent Primary Preparatory School for Girls; Khalid Bin Ahmad Al Thani Preparatory Independent School for Boys; Moza Bint Mohammed Preparatory Independent School for Girls; Abou Bakr Saddiq Independent Preparatory School for Boys; Ghwayriya Independent School for Girls; Al Ahnaf Bin Qais Preparatory Independent School for Boys; Al Karanana Primary Preparatory Independent School for Boys; Zubara Primary Preparatory Independent School for Boys; Rawdat Rashid Primary Preparatory Secondary Independent School for Boys, Abdallah Bin Ali Al Misnad Preparatory Independent School for Boys; Al Karanana Primary Preparatory Independent School for Boys; Dukhan Independent School for Boys; Khalid Bin Waleed Preparatory Independent School for Boys; Doha Preparatory Independent School for Boys; English Modern School Doha; English Modern School Al Khor; Qatar Canadian School; Al Hikma International School; International School of Choueifat German School; Qatar Leadership Academy; Cambridge School for Girls; Al Hammad International Developed School; Al Jazeera Academy.
Targeting infections in diabetes patients

Doctors from all over the world gathered at a workshop organized by WCM-Q to explore multi-disciplinary approaches to preventing and treating infections in people with diabetes. The three-day event, held at the Doha Hilton and hosted by WCM-Q with support from the Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF), brought together expert clinicians and researchers from institutions based in Qatar, the UK, Denmark, the US and elsewhere to share research findings and discuss avenues for future collaboration.

Dr. Shahrad Taheri, chair of the event and assistant dean for clinical investigations at WCM-Q, said: “Infections are a very serious, yet much neglected complication of diabetes and it is therefore very encouraging to see so many of you here today to share your knowledge with one another. By taking a multi-disciplinary approach to diabetes research and treatment we give ourselves the best chance of developing improved care of patients with diabetes, both in Qatar and the wider world.”

“Thanks to the support of Qatar National Research Fund and other investment in biomedical research, Qatar is fast becoming one of the best places in the world to conduct diabetes research.”

The workshop, entitled ‘Infections in Patients with Diabetes Mellitus: Evolving Challenges for the 21st Century’ featured presentations, panel discussions and networking sessions aimed at reviewing current understanding of diabetes and identifying the research initiatives needed to satisfy unmet medical needs for diagnosis, treatment and prevention of infections in patients with diabetes.

Dr. Thenaa Khorsheed, acting director/program manager of biomedical and health sciences at QNRF, gave a presentation about the role of QNRF in medical research in Qatar, which was one of 22 presentations given over the three days by representatives of institutions including Hamad Medical Corporation, Sidra Medical and Research Center, Copenhagen Diabetes Research Center (Denmark), and the Department of Public Health at the University of Birmingham, UK. Topics included treatment and prevention of foot infections in diabetes patients, the genetic basis of type-2 diabetes, and novel approaches to diagnosing diabetes, among many others.

Dr. Stephen Atkin, professor of medicine at WCM-Q, spoke about individualized therapy as an evolving practice in the treatment of type-2 diabetes.

He said: “Type-2 diabetes is a very complex and difficult disease to treat and is made even more so because each patient is different. This means that individualized care is absolutely crucial to ensure that each patient achieves the very best health outcomes possible.

“By sharing knowledge at events such as this we can develop a collaborative approach to treatment that will help us to deliver the individualized care that patients with diabetes need.”

The next generation of Qatari scientists

Four talented young Qatari graduates joined the Biomedical Research Training Program for Nationals at WCM-Q where they have been learning the skills required to pursue a successful career in research.

The six-month training program runs from January to June each year and provides comprehensive instruction and work experience to recent Qatari graduates in WCM-Q’s state-of-the-art laboratories. Working with the college’s world-class research scientists, the interns learn a wide variety of competencies including practical lab skills, how to undertake clinical research and research administration.

This year’s interns were Khaloud AlTurki, a sociology major from Qatar University; Naira AlThani, a biology graduate from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland; and Moza AlKuwari, a biomedical science graduate from Qatar University and healthcare management graduate from the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and Njoud AlNaama, a biology graduate from Cornell University.

Not only does the Biomedical Research Training Program for Nationals offer a solid grounding in the basic skills required to work in the research field, it also gives the interns the opportunity to contribute to real research projects being conducted at WCM-Q.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q, said: “We were very happy to welcome this new intake of interns to the Biomedical Research Training Program for Nationals. During their six-month stay with us, these young graduates have been developing the skills, confidence and experience to help them pursue very exciting opportunities in the world of research.

“WCM-Q has been extremely rewarding for them personally, and will also help to create the new generation of scientific innovators Qatar needs to build its knowledge economy and realize the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.”

This was the sixth annual cycle of the Biomedical Research Training Program for Nationals, which was launched in 2011 and to date has helped 24 Qatari graduates take the first step on the path to a successful career in research. WCM-Q also runs internship programs for high school and college students with an interest in research. To learn more about the different research training programs at WCM-Q or to apply, visit: http://qatar-weill.cornell.edu/research/researchprograms.html.

Dr. Shahrad Taheri said infections were often a neglected complication of diabetes.
Winners of the 2016 Excellence in Education awards.

Dr. Basim Uthman, professor of clinical neuroscience and professor of clinical neurology, with Alive Inside director Michael Rossato-Bennett.

Hisham Abdelwahab, Zaid Shahrori, Abivarma Chandrakumaran and Fawzi Zghyer take on the soap football challenge.

Heta Zadumor paints a mug during Basant.
Motivational speaker Liz Keaney speaks at Administrative Professionals Day.

WCM-Q administrators mark Administrative Professionals Day with speaker and author Liz Keaney.

WCM-Q also said a fond farewell to Ellen Sayed, Director of the Distributed eLibrary (center), after nine years of distinguished services.