QATAR CHRONICLE
The magazine of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar
Winter 2016

A curriculum for the 21st century
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>High-achievers on Dean’s Honor List</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>WCM-Q pays tribute to the wisdom and generosity of local doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Full circle as alumnus joins college faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>A new medical curriculum for the 21st century physician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Your Health First celebrates Qatar National Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Five years of achievements for YHF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Triplets become the latest siblings to study medicine at WCM-Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Mapping the Qatari genome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Studying the health benefits of dates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dr. Javaid Sheikh with those students inducted onto the Dean's Honors List (see overleaf).
High-achievers on Dean’s Honor List

Pre-medical students who achieved academic excellence in the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 terms were inducted onto the Dean’s Honor List at a ceremony held at Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Center.

In the Fall 2015 term, 24 first-year and ten second-year pre-medical students attained GPA scores of 3.75 or above to make it onto the honor list. In the Spring 2016 term, 12 first-year and ten second-year pre-medical students qualified for the list. The ceremony also recognized the achievements of four foundation students who were honored for academic excellence over the past year.

Several pre-medical students celebrated a double success as they qualified for the honor list in both terms.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, invited each student onto the stage to receive a commemorative gift.

Dr. Sheikh said: “Each student included on this list is entitled to feel extremely proud of their achievement. It takes huge amounts of persistence, focus and hard work to achieve such remarkable grades and I am extremely impressed by your efforts.

“I am sure that your professors, families and friends are equally impressed by your dedication to your studies. Well done to all of you.”
Dean’s Honor List 2016
Fall 2015 Term

Pre-medical Program Year 1
- Ramez Bodair
- Jungyoon Jung
- Shahryar Rana
- Ajay Menon
- Tehniyat Baig
- Heta Ladumor
- Muhammad Hassan Rehman
- Hissa Al-Hail
- Heba Altarawneh
- Nada Mobayed
- Wajina Yousuf
- Mahmood Alorphaly
- Isha Lamba
- Abdallah Torn
- Moza Almohannadi
- Salma Al-Mohannadi
- Rozaleen Aleyadeh
- Raihan El-Naas
- Hania Ibrahim
- Basel Humos
- Amina Kunnummal
- Shawn D’Souza
- Seon Woo Kim
- Tasnim Mushannen

Pre-medical Program Year 2
- Sara Mohamed
- Chandrakumaran Abivarma
- Menatalla Mekhaimar
- Cleo Zarina Reyes
- Zaid Shahrori
- Welathanthrige Botheju
- Huda Alalami
- Priyamvada Pillai
- Gi Eun Kim
- Sharan Yadav

Dr. Javaid Sheikh said each student on the list should feel proud of their achievement.

WCM-Q alumnus Dr. Muhamed Baljevic was guest speaker at the event.
WCM-Q pays tribute to the wisdom and generosity of local doctors

WCM-Q has honored the vital work of hundreds of local physicians who selflessly share their knowledge and experience to help train the college’s doctors of the future. As part of their medical training, in the final two years of their medical degrees, WCM-Q students spend a total of 55 weeks on clinical clerkships in affiliated institutions like Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC). Here they can begin to apply the knowledge they have learned in the classroom and also acquire the hands-on skills needed to be a fully qualified doctor under the supervision of experienced physicians who are affiliated with WCM-Q. It was these 467 physicians that the college thanked, presenting them with a WCM-Q doctor’s white coat, and WCM-Q business
cards at a ceremony at HMC’s Hajar Auditorium.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said the work of WCM-Q’s affiliate doctors is invaluable, both to the education of the next generation of doctors, but also to the future of healthcare in Qatar. The affiliates practice in a range of institutions including HMC, Sidra Medical and Research Center, Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), and Feto-Maternal Center.

Dr. Sheikh said: “As a medical college we can teach our student doctors how to diagnose illnesses, how to provide comfort and support, and how to save lives. However, it is the doctors at our affiliate institutions who show them how to put that knowledge into practice.

“Among them, our faculty colleagues at WCM-Q’s affiliates have a wealth of experience that can only be learned through decades of work in hospitals, clinics, surgeries and healthcare centers. It is this knowledge and wisdom in fields as varied as obstetrics, internal medicine, surgery, neurology, psychiatry and pediatrics that they are passing on to our students.

“In turn, WCM-Q provides training and support through our Division of Continued Professional Development that allows Qatar’s physicians to embrace the concept of lifelong learning, to learn new skills and to stay abreast of medical advances.

“Together, through a symbiotic relationship that unites medical education, research and clinical practice, we are creating highly-skilled doctors and a culture of excellence in healthcare that is benefiting Qatar now and will continue to benefit it into the future.”

One of those affiliate doctors is WCM-Q alumna Dr. Mashael Al-Khelaifi, assistant professor of clinical anesthesiology, who, having completed her medical degree and residency, has come full circle and is now working at HMC helping to train a new cohort of doctors. Her story is similar to
that of many of WCM-Q’s alumni, the first wave of whom graduated in 2008 and then spent several years in the US or at HMC completing their chosen residency program. They are now returning to Qatar and will become the healthcare leaders of the future, driving the nation forward to achieve ever-greater clinical excellence.

It is not only third and fourth year students, however, who benefit from the guidance, encouragement and expertise of WCM-Q’s affiliate physicians. The foundation class and students studying the pre-medical curriculum all benefit from career seminars and lectures delivered by the affiliate doctors, while students in their first and second years of the medical curriculum spend time in clinics shadowing qualified physicians and healthcare practitioners.

Dr. Abdulla Al-Ansari, deputy chief medical officer – surgical services, at HMC and associate dean for clinical medicine at HMC, WCM-Q, said the relationship between HMC and WCM-Q is like a marriage that gets stronger every day.

Dr. Al-Ansari said: “It’s healthy to have a good relationship between a hospital and a medical school. Our relationship has been going for 10 years and it’s getting stronger and stronger.

“WCM-Q students join us for surgery and on our ward rounds and all the students I have seen are enthusiastic and very energetic. That means we have to keep up with them; when you have energetic students it energizes their doctors and teachers. They really have a very positive effect on the environment and it means they also have good relationships with the nurses and patients.”

Dr. Al-Ansari said that another benefit of accepting
students from WCM-Q - both from a clinical and research perspective - was that they are already aware of the local culture, the way that the hospital operates and its ethos. He also said that while HMC was able to provide practical lessons to the students, WCM-Q was able to reciprocate through academic and research opportunities.

He added: “We want the marriage between HMC and WCM-Q to be close and to be strong and to have ever-greater cooperation. This is a win-win situation for both of us, as then the students are happy and our residents are happy.”

As well as strengthening and integrating the medical system in Qatar, the strong, cohesive partnership between WCM-Q, HMC, Sidra, Aspetar, the PHCC and Feto Maternal Center also helps the nation achieve the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the National Health Strategy by creating a new generation of highly qualified doctors. It also fulfills Qatar Foundation’s mission of unlocking human potential and creating a knowledge-based economy.

Dr. Abdalla Al Kaabi, executive chair of the Children’s Services Clinical Management Group, executive vice chief medical officer and member of the Board of Governors at Sidra Medical and Research Centre, said WCM-Q students were really able to learn about the life of a doctor when working with the affiliates, and they learned lessons that are difficult to teach in the classroom, like patient management and interaction. But it’s not all a one-way street and accepting students also benefits physicians.

Dr. Al Kaabi said: “For the doctor they, of course, learn from the student particularly if the students are asking challenging questions which they have to think about.”

He added that the relationship between Sidra and WCM-Q was also positive for Qatar as it builds human capacity and helps to generate knowledge.

He said: “It is of great benefit for Qatar. Having a medical school, particularly a well-respected American school like Cornell, is a great attraction for Sidra staff as many of them want to continue their links with academia and a recognized medical school. It would have been harder for us to attract top academics if Cornell had not been in Qatar and that has been a common theme when we interview people.”
Dr. Grigory Ostrovskiy, WCM-Q’s new assistant professor of emergency medicine, is the first graduate of the college to return as a faculty member.
Full circle as alumnus joins college faculty

WCM-Q is celebrating the completion of a “virtuous circle” after welcoming a graduate back to the college as a faculty member for the very first time.

Dr. Grigory Ostrovskiy, aged 28, completed his MD degree at WCM-Q back in 2011 before securing a place in a highly sought-after emergency medicine residency program at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. Having completed his residency, Dr. Ostrovskiy has now returned to Doha to become WCM-Q’s new assistant professor of emergency medicine.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said that Dr. Ostrovskiy’s appointment represented a historic milestone in the life of the college, which began operations in 2002.

“This is a very important moment for us because we have always been very serious about our commitment to producing world-class physicians and educators who will serve the community here in Qatar,” said Dr. Sheikh.

“This is the first example of the ‘virtuous circle’ whereby our extremely well-trained alumni return to the college to educate the next generation of doctors and serve patients in Qatar. We are absolutely delighted to have a new faculty member of Dr. Ostrovskiy’s talent and we now look forward to welcoming a steady stream of former students back to WCM-Q in the future.”

In his new role, Dr. Ostrovskiy will teach WCM-Q medical students the theory and practice of ‘point-of-care ultrasound’, as well as providing mentorship and helping students who wish to pursue residency programs in emergency medicine to fulfill their ambition. He will also treat patients at Hamad General Hospital’s Emergency Department.

Dr. Ostrovskiy, who is originally from St. Petersburg, Russia, said: “I am delighted to return to Qatar and to WCM-Q, which hold many happy memories for me. I am very excited about passing on to the current generation of students some of the knowledge I learned at WCM-Q and in the US. It feels very good to give something back.

“Emergency medicine is a fascinating specialty because every day is different - you never know what your day is going to be like when you wake up in the morning. You might treat someone who has had a heart attack, has broken bones, had a stroke, or suffered a flesh wound, and you often have the opportunity to see very dramatic improvements in patients in a very short time after you treat them. It’s very rewarding in that way.”

Dr. Ostrovskiy moved with his family from Russia to the United Arab Emirates in the late 1990s and graduated from high school in Dubai in 2005. He then joined WCM-Q’s Pre-medical Program in the same year before being admitted to the Medical Program in 2007, from which he graduated in 2011. He then began his residency in New York. He is Board Certified in Emergency Medicine by the American Board of Emergency Medicine (2016) and is licensed to practice Emergency Medicine in New York and Rhode Island. He has served on the Emergency Medicine Resident Association’s National Committees on Critical Care, Education, and Research.

Dr. Ostrovskiy's research interests include point-of-care ultrasound, toxicology, and critical care. He has a special interest in the treatment of heatstroke and plans to conduct research to determine the most effective way to treat the condition.

He said: “Naturally, heatstroke is very common right across the Gulf region and it is therefore very important that we establish the most effective treatment protocols possible. I hope my research can help us to do that.”
A new medical curriculum for the 21st century physician

In the most comprehensive change to its curriculum since the college began operations in 2002, WCM-Q has reviewed, revised and modernized its four-year Medical Program, bringing it into line with the curriculum taught at the home campus in New York.

The result is a new, highly integrated medical curriculum that stands among the most rigorous and progressive available anywhere in the world.

“The thing about progress is that it doesn’t wait to check if you’re ready for it,” says Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q.

“That’s why we feel very strongly that it is absolutely crucial to place yourself at the forefront of positive change, to be one of the drivers of innovation rather than one of the passengers. This is the spirit that has informed the design of our new curriculum, which has been carefully calibrated down to the smallest detail to produce physicians who will thrive in today’s ever-changing, technologically advanced healthcare environment.

“It is a 21st century curriculum designed to produce tech-savvy, inquisitive and adaptive physicians who are able to assimilate new knowledge, engage in research and acquire new skills throughout their careers so that their patients benefit from advances in medicine as they occur. In short, it is a curriculum designed to produce world-class, 21st century physicians.”

Building the new curriculum

When the Class of 2020 embarked on the four-year Medical Program in September 2016, they did so as the first cohort of students to experience WCM-Q’s new curriculum. This new program of study is the result of four years of painstaking review and consultation, which began at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York and was later applied here in Qatar, as senior faculty deliberated over the most effective way to combine the academic rigor of a traditional medical curriculum with novel pedagogical approaches that place greater emphasis on critical thinking and promote identity formation, inquiry and self-improvement. To facilitate these new priorities, the curriculum has been designed to allow individualization of experience, and to provide more interactive time and more exposure to patients both inside and outside the classroom.

Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, senior associate dean for medical education and continuing professional development, explained: “The previous curriculum gave us an excellent model to adapt, so our aim was not to disregard it and start again. Rather, we sought to preserve the best of it, adapt and revise parts we felt needed to be updated, and to introduce new material and teaching methodologies based on the latest research.”
Dr. Arayssi said that four key guiding principles emerged from this process:

- Earlier introduction to and increased focus on the development of Patient Care and Physicianship (PCP) skills;
- Increased use of hi-tech learning tools and SIM (Simulation-based Immersive Medicine) training;
- Enhanced level of integration between the three identified curriculum themes of Science, Patient Care, and Physicianship;
- Provision of a longitudinal research experience that starts from day one of the curriculum and concludes in the final year with an in-depth project conducted under the supervision of a faculty member.

Dr. Arayssi continued: “It is this enhanced level of integration that we feel has really transformed the curriculum and made it not only more effective as a program for producing very highly skilled physicians, but also more intellectually stimulating and engaging for our students.”

The new curriculum broadly follows that of WCM-Q’s home campus in New York, with certain adaptations to fit local circumstances and maximize the benefits of WCM-Q’s particular strengths, such as its favorable student to faculty ratio, well-developed biomedical research program and support from Qatar Foundation. The new four-year medical curriculum is designed to follow on from the two-year WCM-Q pre-medical curriculum. Together, the two curricula form the cohesive and comprehensive WCM-Q Six-Year Medical Program.

**An integrated curriculum**

The traditional model for medical curricula adheres to a very linear and compartmentalized model. Under this model, students spent the early part of the curriculum studying normal and abnormal biology separately, before eventually entering the clinic to interact with patients.

Under the new WCM-Q curriculum, the timetable has been carefully reconfigured so that courses that fall under the three themes of Science, Patient Care, and Physicianship run concurrently, rather than consecutively. This allows professors to coordinate complementary learning experiences that span different courses, providing an integrated and unified approach and a far richer overall learning experience for students than the traditional, more segmented system.

Dr. Lotfi Chouchane, assistant dean for the basic
science curriculum and professor of genetic medicine, microbiology and immunology, explained: “The purpose of the integrated approach is to provide a variety of different but thematically linked learning experiences that reinforce and complement one another across the various courses. “For example, students will learn the pathophysiology of a disease – let’s say cardiovascular disease – in the classroom from their textbooks. That same week they will have an anatomy lab in which they can examine the structures of the heart muscle in minute detail under the guidance of a trained anatomist. The next day they will be at the hospital interviewing a patient who is recovering from a heart attack. Each of these learning experiences dovetails with the others, making the new information relevant and compelling for the student. “We believe this is a far superior model to the traditional medical curriculum, in which a student would work through every disease in the textbook and only then start anatomy class, and only much later would be allowed into the clinic to interact with patients.”

In order to bring courses into line with one another, Year 1 students now begin anatomy classes and visit the hospital to interact with patients in the first semester instead of having to wait until the second semester as was previously the case.

Dr. Amine Rakab, assistant professor of clinical medicine and assistant dean for clinical learning, said: “In addition to allowing us to integrate the various courses, this also means we can start teaching students fundamental physicianship skills from the first week of medical school. This continues right through the entire four-year curriculum under our Patient Care and Physicianship (PCP) theme.”

Another new feature of the curriculum is the provision of a four-month period allocated for research for every student. This will allow students to develop research skills but will also encourage them to self-identify as physician-scholars who actively contribute new knowledge to the medical profession by conducting their own scientific investigations.

Behind the scenes

The complex work of implementing the new curriculum has been performed by many dedicated staff members at WCM-Q who have ensured a seamless transition from the previous curriculum. Much of this work was carried out in the Office of Curriculum Support by teams led by Lydia Fernandes, foundational science curriculum specialist, and Sudha Karthikeyan, clinical curriculum specialist. Lydia’s team, which comprises curriculum assistants for
foundational sciences Harsha Moidu and Asma Parkar, is responsible for the first and second years of the curriculum. Lydia said: “The integration of the foundational sciences and the clinical components of the curriculum was quite intricate and involved a great deal of teamwork. Thanks to very effective communication and a wonderful spirit of cooperation among staff and faculty I feel that together we have been able to make the transition to the new curriculum a great success.”

As the Class of 2020 are the first class to experience the new curriculum, changes have so far only affected the first year of study. However, preparations have been made to ensure a smooth transition to the new curriculum as the Class of 2020 progresses to the second, third and fourth years.

Sudha’s team is primarily responsible for the third and fourth years of the curriculum and comprises senior curriculum assistants Rochelle Gatdula and Marilyn Fabio. Rita Vaz, clinical curriculum specialist, also contributed to the preparations for the transition process. Sudha said: “It is imperative that the transition to the new curriculum is well coordinated and straightforward so that the education provided to the students meets WCM-Q’s extremely high standards. As such, we have worked closely with our colleagues to make very careful plans for the transition so that we will be ready when the Class of 2020 reaches the third and fourth years of the curriculum.”

Dr. Arayssi commented: “Our highly skilled and dedicated staff have gone beyond the call of duty to ensure the transition to the new curriculum has been smooth and straightforward. Their contribution has been absolutely essential to the success of this project and we cannot thank them enough.”

Learning essential physicianship skills from week one

The Patient Care and Physicianship (PCP) theme is a longitudinal experience that runs through the whole curriculum and introduces students to the special skill set physicians require, such as communications skills, an understanding of medical ethics in practice, and general professionalism. Under the new curriculum, students in their first year of medical school are taught how to approach a patient, take their medical history and perform a physical exam, all under close supervision by the faculty.

Dr. Rakab continued: “For students who dream of the day they will become doctors, having experiences like this at an early stage in their training provides a tremendous boost to morale and motivation, as well as giving them more time
overall to develop these essential skills. Traditional medical programs have tended to split training into a long initial phase focused almost entirely on theory, which provided crucial knowledge but was not stimulating and did not teach patient care or physicianship skills.

“In contrast, the new WCM-Q curriculum is designed to ensure that students acquire the same essential foundational knowledge, and to simultaneously teach them the core principles that they need to function as extremely competent physicians. We know from early feedback that students absolutely cherish these learning opportunities.”

Class of 2020 student Abdulla Al-Mulla is among the first cohort of students experiencing the new curriculum. Speaking in December 2016, just three months after beginning the course, he said: “Meeting patients so early is extremely motivating. Of course, the science is vital, but for me everything in medicine depends upon the quality of the doctor-patient relationship. For this reason I am very happy to already be interacting with patients and learning how to reach out to them.”

Fellow Class of 2020 student student Huda Alalami said: “We have already been to the hospital four times and we have been allowed to do interviews with patients. What I love is that it feels like we are learning to become physicians, not just learning material to pass exams. It feels real and I feel very happy – it makes you feel like you made the right choice and you’re already making progress towards becoming a doctor.”

Fawzi Zghyer, also of the Class of 2020, said: “We are all here for medicine and to see clinical experiences and anatomy integrated with basic sciences is really something special for us. I feel this is actually helping me to understand more deeply how important the basic sciences are, and working with patients is showing us how to build relationships based on mutual trust, empathy and compassion.”

Revised and enhanced anatomy training

With more emphasis being placed on anatomy training at an earlier stage, WCM-Q has expanded its anatomy offering with significant investment in new teaching faculty.
Dr. Ameed Raoof has joined the college as professor of anatomy in radiology and Dr. Mange Manyama has joined as assistant professor of anatomy in radiology. Both new professors have advanced technical expertise in dissection, and Dr. Raoof is a pioneer of plastination – a sophisticated and relatively new technique for preserving tissue using silicone rubber. In addition, WCM-Q will soon be equipped with a hi-tech ‘anatomage table’ - a desk-sized touchscreen tablet loaded with advanced software that allows the user to perform incredibly detailed virtual dissections of the human body.

Dr. Avelin Malyango, assistant professor of anatomy in radiology, said: “We feel that the integration of anatomy with the basic sciences and clinical experience are delivering extraordinarily rich learning experiences to our students and this process has been greatly enhanced by the recruitment of our new teaching faculty. Their expertise and enthusiasm for the integrated approach of the new curriculum, along with improved technologies like plastination and the anatomage table, are placing anatomy training at the center of the education that the First Year’s receive and they have responded to this extremely positively.”

Student Noora Al-Hail said: “What I like so far is that the curriculum seems so well-rounded. We are learning about many aspects of medicine rather than just one aspect at a time. There is also a culture that encourages the student to be a researcher and an explorer, which is very inspiring for us.”

Supporting change with infrastructure investment

The development of the new curriculum has been supported by a coordinated program of modernization and investment in WCM-Q’s facilities, explained Dr. Stella Major, associate professor of family medicine in clinical medicine.

“To provide the learning experiences of the new curriculum the college has significantly expanded and enhanced several of its teaching spaces and a program of investment in state-of-the-art teaching aids is underway,” said Dr. Major.

Many of these improvements have taken place within the Clinical Skills Center (CSC), the college’s dedicated simulation-based learning facility. The number of consultation rooms where students can practice their OSCEs (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations) with standardized patients will be doubled from six to 12. In addition, a new space has been created to house a number of hyper-realistic medical mannequins that can be programmed to simulate a vast array of symptoms and illnesses, and which can be remotely manipulated in real time by a supervising faculty member to provide extremely lifelike clinical experiences for students.

Further modifications include complete replacement of the CSC’s old audiovisual observation system with a far more sophisticated high-resolution version, and investment in a new Learning Management System (LMS) that allows students to view video of all of the examinations they have conducted in the CSC. The system also has an annotation function so that students and faculty can log feedback directly onto video clips.

In addition to upgrading the physical infrastructure of the college, WCM-Q is also supporting the new curriculum by investing in human resources. As such, the Division of Medical Education has recruited a simulation education specialist, Joshua Vognsen.

Dr. Major continued: “The new technology that is being installed in the CSC brings WCM-Q to the forefront of medical education and offers tremendously rich learning experiences. The new LMS also greatly improves accessibility to learning materials and makes the process of giving feedback incredibly efficient. It also makes it very easy for students to see which areas they need to improve and helps them track their progress as they move through the curriculum. These new tools are making it a hugely exciting and rewarding time to be a student at WCM-Q.”
Embracing innovative teaching methodologies

Innovation in the new curriculum is not limited to the use of groundbreaking technologies, but also entails utilization of novel teaching methodologies. For example, the Patients as Teachers Program (PATP) is a new initiative launched in 2016 that recognizes the valuable learning experiences students gain from working closely with patients.

Another innovation is the introduction of a ‘Bootcamp’ elective that provides rigorous and personalized training to help prepare final year students for the transition to residency training, which entails a very steep learning curve.

Dr. Arayssi explained: “Newly qualified doctors are suddenly faced with markedly increased clinical responsibilities that require strong interpersonal, communication and organizational skills in addition to medical training. The new Bootcamp elective focuses on equipping students with these essential skills, as well as life skills to help them deal with the pressure of their new environment.”

The Bootcamp will also teach students how to manage common medical emergencies, how to rapidly identify sick patients, when and how to ask for help, and how to look after their own well-being. The Bootcamp will also be tailored to each individual student to take account of the specialty they have chosen.

Dr. Arayssi added: “We think the Bootcamp will emerge as an extremely important tool for helping students prepare for the pressures of postgraduate medical training.”

Integrated research: reviving the concept of the physician-scholar

Inculcating a passion for research is a key requirement for producing doctors who are able to not only adapt to change but also to be drivers of innovation. As such, the new curriculum has been designed to encourage students to view themselves as physician-scholars who engage in both clinical practice and academic research to make discoveries that contribute new knowledge and improvements in patient care. Furthermore, the curriculum now provides four months of protected time in the fourth year for students to conduct their own research projects and develop key competencies such as lab skills, clinical research methods, administrative and project design skills, research ethics, and how to draft publications and present findings.

In addition to the four-month research period, the new curriculum also provides multiple research experiences throughout the four-year program.

Dr. Laith Abu-Raddad, associate professor of healthcare policy and research, said: “The philosophy behind this focus on research is this concept of the physician-scholar. If we look back through history we see that the most renowned physicians of the ancient world were also scholars, going right back to Ancient Greece and progressing through to the Islamic scholars of the Golden Age.

“But this desire to revive the spirit of the physician-scholar is not just a romantic notion. In fact, it is an unavoidable part of the landscape of modern medicine, in which new advances happen every single day. In order for the modern physician to keep up with and participate in positive change, they have to be engaged in the world of research and be open-minded about progress, but also equipped with the critical reasoning skills to determine which innovations will benefit their patients.”

Under the previous curriculum, students who wished to conduct prolonged research had to find the time themselves, which often required taking a year off and delaying their graduation. Now students have a mandatory, protected period for a meaningful research experience.

Dr. Abu-Raddad said: “Making this research experience mandatory integrates research into the curriculum in a powerful way. This will produce a generation of WCM-Q physicians who see themselves not just as healthcare providers and users of medical knowledge, but also as researchers dedicated to continuously improving the
quality of healthcare provision and contributing to an ever expanding body of medical knowledge.”

Class of 2020 student Mohammed Al-Abdulla remarked: “The emphasis on research is something I feel is very important because medicine is always changing. This means medicine will always be interesting and challenging, but it is also a duty of a good physician to follow research and conduct research in order to give the very best care to his patients.”

Investing in people

Lifelong learning is a key feature of a career in medicine and WCM-Q is committed to helping its faculty augment their skills to meet the demands of the new curriculum.

As WCM-Q’s newly recruited assistant dean for continuing professional development and director of the Office of Educational Development, Dr. Ming-Jung Ho is a key figure in this endeavor.

She said: “Our faculty members are experts in their own academic fields but with the new emphasis on integration of the curriculum we are asking them to do something slightly different. I am happy to say that the faculty have responded to this change with great eagerness. They can see how much it benefits the students and they relish the chance to develop and update their own skills. They have seized this opportunity to embrace change and develop new teaching approaches and skills that fit with the new curriculum.

“In this I think we are helped by the ‘institutional DNA’ of WCM-Q. As a relatively young institution, I think WCM-Q naturally has a very open-minded, progressive attitude to innovation. Unlike in some older institutions, faculty here are not burdened by long-standing traditions. If something new works, they use it, and this is helping us to deliver an extremely progressive and forward-looking new curriculum.”

Strengthening existing partnerships; forging new bonds

Under the new curriculum, WCM-Q students will continue to gain crucial hands-on experience in clinical care at WCM-Q clinical affiliates Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Aspetar, the Primary Health Care Corporation and the Feto Maternal Centre. In addition, a new clinical rotation has been established with Sidra Medical and Research Center, which is now hosting WCM-Q students on the Obstetrics and Gynecology Clerkship.

Sidra will be a primary teaching facility for WCM-Q, providing students with excellent opportunities to develop their clinical skills and participate in cutting-edge biomedical research in a state-of-the-art facility. The breadth and depth of services provide by WCM-Q’s clinical affiliates ensure that WCM-Q students on the new curriculum benefit from an extremely diverse and comprehensive range of learning opportunities. Familiarity with a diverse range of clinical environments and experiences also helps prepare WCM-Q students to become Qatar’s next generation of physicians.

A bright future

With the new curriculum already being taught to the Class of 2020 and plans for further infrastructure enhancement already well underway, WCM-Q is looking forward to a bright future as a beacon of learning and progress in the heart of the MENA region, said Dean Sheikh.

“The hard work that has been done by faculty and staff at WCM-Q to adapt the latest advances in US medical education to our local strengths here in Qatar ensure that our students benefit from the best of both East and West,” he said.

“Along with the generous and resolute support of Qatar Foundation and Qatar’s visionary leadership, this will ensure we continue to deliver a truly world-class, 21st century medical education that is not only unparalleled in our region but is also able to compete on level terms with the very best medical colleges anywhere in the world.”
Your Health First helps celebrate Qatar National Day

Thousands of children visited the Yalla Natural trailer and learned about healthy lifestyles as WCM-Q’s health campaign celebrated Qatar National Day.

Yalla Natural, which is part of the wider community campaign Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First, was invited to participate in the Qatar Foundation tent at Darb Al Saai as part of the National Day celebrations.

Along with the Yalla Natural truck, visitors were able to plant their own fruit and vegetable seeds and make their own healthy smoothies on the blender bikes.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said it was a great honor to be able to celebrate Qatar National Day at Darb Al Saai, and a wonderful opportunity to take the message about healthy lifestyles to the community.

Dr. Sheikh said: “WCM-Q’s Yalla Natural truck has been inundated with children and young people and while they are having fun on the blender bikes or planting their own vegetable seeds, we are able to offer lessons about living a healthy life that they will hopefully take into adulthood. We want to help create a healthy generation who unlock their potential and are able to meet the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.”

Visitors were also able to see cookery demonstrations that transformed healthy ingredients into delicious meals suitable for all the family. Parents could also take away recipe cards to try at home.

In all, Yalla Natural was visited by thousands of schoolchildren along with their teachers, and they were full of praise for the campaign.

Victoria Horsburgh, a physical education teacher at Awsaj Academy at QF, said: “Health issues are obviously so
important for our children. We have a high rate of diabetes in Qatar so we try to educate the children as much as we can about making healthy choices and coming to places like this where they learn about health and where the lessons are in both Arabic and English is really important and good for them.”

Laila Hussain, resources director at Assalam School, said the Your Health First campaign had been a huge help to the school in helping to improve the health of the students.

She said: “We talk about nutrition and health to the students and explain why good health is important. “The children are very interested and initiatives like Your Health First help a lot. Today we have taken Yalla Natural recipes that the children can cook and with Project Greenhouse, the children have been planting fruit and vegetable seeds and learning about their importance in their daily life.”

Teacher David Knippa, of English Modern School, said that campaigns like Your Health First and the Yalla Natural initiative were valuable as they raised awareness of health issues in the students’ consciousness.

He said health education was taken very seriously at the school, with children constantly reminded about the importance of eating fruit and vegetables and avoiding foods high in fat and sugar.

Mr Knippa added: “We teach them about the food pyramid and the kind of things that they should be eating. We do our best and I show them the fruit and vegetables that I eat on a daily basis to encourage them.”
HH Sheikha Moza is shown Project Greenhouse by students and Dr. Javaid Sheikh.
Your Health First celebrates five years of achievements

WCM-Q has celebrated the fifth anniversary of its innovative and remarkable health campaign Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First.

In the five years that Sahtak Awalan has been operating it has made a real impact on the health landscape of Qatar, influencing and educating the community to lead healthier lives for the benefit of their health and wellness. There has also been a major focus on the nation’s youth, advocating preventative measures that will help the next generation stay healthy and rise to the challenges of Qatar National Vision 2030. VIPs including Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, heard the story of the campaign, from its inception to its future plans.

The audience, which included more than 1,000 schoolchildren who have acted as ambassadors for the Sahtak Awalan campaign, heard how the campaign was inspired by WCM-Q’s mission to improve healthcare both now and for future generations, and by the specific health issues affecting Qatar, namely diabetes and obesity. They also heard how Sahtak Awalan has promoted prevention and small lifestyle changes that could be easily achieved yet would make a big difference to people’s health and that of their families by preventing disease from striking.

During the event, the audience was told about the campaign’s achievements along with hearing its future five-year strategic plans to build on the success.
Launched in 2012 in association with the Ministry of Public Health, Sahtak Awalan’s strategic partners include Qatar Foundation, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Occidental Petroleum, ExxonMobil, and Qatar Olympic Committee. The leaders of each of those organizations appeared in a film explaining what Sahtak Awalan meant to the health of Qatar and why they were committed to its goals.

Her Excellency Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al Thani, serves as vice chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation.

HE said: “The health of our young people is paramount to the future of our nation. They will one day help lead Qatar and we ought to ensure they are healthy and that they are able to live up to their full potential. Qatar is a nation that is a vanguard for productive change and with the support of Qatar Foundation, that is exactly what Your Health First is doing – helping children and families make a positive change that has an emphatic impact on their lives. Together, we have engaged with thousands of young people and used innovative programs to ensure they understand the value of nutrition, exercise and good health and their role in preventing disease in later life.”

Her Excellency Dr. Hanan Mohamed Al Kuwari, minister of public health, said good health among Qatar’s people is vital to the success of the nation.

HE said: “The Ministry of Public Health is committed to working closely with Sahtak Awalan so that together we can educate people about healthy living, exercise and nutrition and enable them to make informed choices about their health. We recognize that the lifestyle diseases within Qatar’s population threaten to reduce our quality of life unless we work together to reverse their rising trend. This means individuals, families, employers, schools and government all playing their part and taking responsibility for developing a healthier society. I am proud of the achievements our partnership with Sahtak Awalan has delivered and look forward to continuing our efforts to improve the health of our population – a healthy society is central to the realization of Qatar’s National Vision 2030.”

His Excellency Dr. Mohammed Abdul Wahed Al-Hammadi, minister of education and higher education, applauded the fruitful partnership with WCM-Q in implementing Sahtak Awalan in schools across Qatar for the fifth year running. HE also praised the many initiatives run by Sahtak Awalan such as Project Greenhouse and the Poster Competition, which inspired school children to live healthy lives.
“What really distinguishes Sahtak Awalan from other health campaigns is that it researches our community and delivers well-thought-out solutions to the most pressing health issues. For example, Project Greenhouse promoted a balanced and healthy diet and encouraged school children to grow their own plants at home. School children have been involved in research and poster competitions on issues such as smoking, road accidents, unhealthy eating habits and related diseases such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease and cancer. This interactive involvement of students is of vital importance taking into consideration the prevalence of these diseases and bad habits in our society,” HE said.

HE also praised the crucial role of WCM-Q in spreading health awareness and harnessing all its scientific, research, academic and human resources to raise awareness in schools. This helps students acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, contributes to achieving education goals and underscores WCM-Q’s commitment to corporate social responsibility in addition to its academic world-class programs.

“I would like also to thank our students for their active participation in Sahtak Awalan and its many initiatives, and for spreading the word to their families and friends and adopting healthy eating habits. The school is definitely the best place to instill good habits from an early age, and I urge all school administrations and stakeholders to work with Sahtak Awalan and adapt the school environment to make the best use of the campaign,” HE concluded.

Dr. Thani Al-Kuwari, secretary general of Qatar Olympic Committee, praised Your Health First for its inclusive attitude to sport and physical activity.

Dr. Al Thani said: “On behalf of the QOC, I would like to congratulate the Your Health First Campaign for all of the success it has achieved since its launch five years ago. At QOC we believe that sport is for all and that it can benefit all - whether as a professional athlete or as a part of an active, healthy lifestyle. The key to Your Health First’s success over the years has been its ability to make sport and physical activity accessible and enjoyable to people of all ages. The QOC looks forward to seeing the Your Health First campaign grow to benefit even more people across the country, as the benefits of sports cannot be overstated.”

These sporting activities have included The Color Run, which was brought to Qatar for the first time by Your Heath First and has seen 13,000 people of all ages and abilities run the five-kilometer course, and also The Challenge. This indoor, inter-schools
sporting challenge has seen more than 1,000 children take part in the event.

The audience at the event was able to visit set-ups of some of Sahtak Awalan’s most successful and innovative initiatives. These include Project Greenhouse, the School Canteens, Yalla Natural, Your Healthy Choice, and the smoothie bikes.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “Healthcare is not just about reacting to an illness with medication and surgery, it should primarily be about cultivating healthy lifestyles to prevent chronic illness. As a doctor I would prefer that people look after their health and that of their families so they never have to see the inside of a hospital.

“In that respect Sahtak Awalan has been a true inspiration as it has taken lessons about good health to Qatar’s community and made those lessons attainable. Sahtak Awalan has helped make the college’s commitment to public health a reality.

“It would not have been possible, however, without the invaluable support of our strategic partners and I offer them my wholehearted thanks for their unswerving faith in the ethos of Sahtak Awalan. Together we are making a real difference to the health of the next generation and the future of Qatar and I can only look forward with anticipation to the next five years.”

Dr. Sheikh’s words had particular resonance precisely because of Sahtak Awalan’s preventative stance. Project Greenhouse, for example, has seen greenhouses, pots, soil and seeds given to primary schools across Qatar, allowing the children to grow and then eat their own fruit and vegetables. Not only does this provide lessons about vitamins, minerals and eating healthily, it also encourages them to try new foods while also learning about the environment and sustainability.

Similarly, Your Healthy Canteens has provided dietary information to students and revamped school menus, allowing them to make informed choices about what they eat. For adults, Yalla Natural has given dozens of cooking demonstrations at public events, showing how great-tasting, healthy meals can be made in a matter of minutes. Shopping has also been made healthier, with Sahtak Awalan’s dietary and nutritional information in many Al Meera supermarkets.

These projects are ongoing and will continue to make a help improve the health of the future generation, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Andrew H. Kershaw, president and general manager of Occidental...
Petroleum of Qatar Ltd. said: “At Occidental Petroleum of Qatar Ltd. (Oxy Qatar), social responsibility (SR) is fundamental to our success and reputation as a respected Partner of Choice. Our core values of integrity, investment and innovation guide our relationships, drive our business performance and serve as a basis of our SR framework in the communities where we operate. We develop and implement sustainable SR programs that not only support our business objectives but positively affect people, communities and the environment. At Oxy Qatar, we actively engage with our key stakeholders to understand the needs of the local community. From there we identify social investment opportunities in key focus areas such as education, health, culture and economic development. Sahtak Awalan is a great example of successfully bringing together partners of different backgrounds to work on a program, such as health education, that can make a tremendous impact in the community.”

Alistair Routledge, president and general manager for ExxonMobil Qatar, said: “ExxonMobil Qatar has supported the Your Health First campaign, an initiative of Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar in association with the Ministry of Public Health, since its inception because we want to increase public awareness of critical health issues that impact the community we live and work in.

“Our support for the campaign underscores our commitment to building a healthier Qatar and maintaining a workforce that can sustain Qatar’s bright future, in line with the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030. We are very proud of its success over the years and look forward to seeing more and more outstanding outcomes in the future,” he added.

The event also heard from YHF ambassador Dr. Jowhara Al Qahtani, of WCM-Q’s Class of 2013, who is currently taking her surgery residency at Hamad Medical Corporation. She spoke of how Sahtak Awalan had inspired her to lose weight and run a half marathon, and how she is now in training for a full marathon. She also told the audience that health and fitness are infectious and that she has friends and colleagues who now join her on her runs.

WCM-Q has always believed in the role of its alumni and students to be ambassadors for Sahtak Awalan, helping to spread awareness about good health.

These ambassadors include Nasser Al-Kuwari (Class of 2022) who recited from the Holy Qur’an during the ceremony, Dr. Bothina Al-Mulla (Class of 2011), Dr. Abdulwahed Zainel (Class of 2014), Dr. Alreem Al-Nabti (Class of 2016), Ahmad Al-Shahrani and Ahmed Saleh and Ahmed Al-Qahtani (Class of 2017), Abdulaziz Al-Thani, Abdulrahman Al-Abdulmalek and Khalid Al-Marri (Class of 2018), Fahad Al-Marri (Class of 2019) and many others who have helped YHF achieve its goals.
Researchers at WCM-Q and the Neurosciences Institute at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) have won a prestigious international funding award for their highly innovative proposal to use eye examinations to aid in early diagnosis, analysis of disease progression, and benefits of treatment in patients with multiple sclerosis.

WCM-Q professor of medicine Dr. Rayaz Malik was presented with the Grant for Multiple Sclerosis Innovation (GMSI) award by the European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis (ECTRIMS). It was one of only four research grants awarded from a total of 260 applications from 45 countries and the first ever to be awarded to the MENA region.

MS is a debilitating disease of the central nervous system in which nerve impulses within the brain, and between the brain and other parts of the body, are disrupted. Symptoms include difficulty walking, vision problems, fatigue, pain and cognitive changes.

New MS test in sight

Dr. Malik and his team of WCM-Q researchers, along with neurologists from HMC, Dr. Saadat Kamran, senior consultant neurologist, and Dr. Ashfaq Shuaib, professor of medicine and neurology and director of the Neuroscience Institute, believe their technique could provide a more accurate and easier method for monitoring MS, giving doctors a valuable tool to both diagnose the disease earlier and treat it more effectively.

Dr. Malik said: “MS is an extremely distressing disease, which is very difficult to monitor and has limited treatment options. Indeed, a major issue is the lack of approval of new promising drugs as many clinical trials have failed due to an inability to show a benefit. Therefore, there is an urgent need for a new monitoring tool that is both reliable and more accurate that could be applied both in the clinic and in clinical trials. Our research indicates that nerve damage in the cornea is a reliable indicator of nerve damage in the brain that characterizes MS.

“The great advantage of this method is that the eye is an extremely accessible part of the body that is relatively easy to examine, while the brain is very inaccessible and difficult to examine.”

The cornea, the transparent front part of the eye that covers the iris, pupil and the anterior chamber, has
the densest concentration of nerve fibers anywhere in the body. Dr. Malik and colleagues have pioneered the technique of ‘corneal confocal microscopy’ (CCM) over the last 15 years to enable close examination and imaging of the cornea’s nerve fibers to identify nerve damage in a variety of conditions including diabetic neuropathy, hereditary neuropathies and in patients with Parkinson’s disease. Contrary to dogma that MS is a demyelinating disease, which primarily affects the brain, the team of researchers at WCM-Q (including Dr. Ioannis Petropoulos) and HMC pursued the idea that CCM could detect nerve damage in patients with MS. To their surprise they found marked nerve fiber loss even in patients with mild deficits.

Importantly, the new test is non-invasive and utilizes existing ophthalmic equipment that many hospitals already have.

The research team will now use the grant to conduct a comprehensive 24-month study to determine whether corneal confocal microscopy can be a viable method for determining nerve damage in patients with MS. The official title of the project is ‘Corneal Confocal Microscopy: A Rapid Non invasive Surrogate Endpoint for Axonal Loss and Repair in Multiple Sclerosis’.

The research has local significance as Qatar appears to have a higher than expected prevalence of MS.

Dr. Malik said: “We are extremely grateful to GMSI and very pleased to receive this grant, especially as it is the first time that such an award has been made in the MENA region. We believe our research is truly translational and is an example of the benefits of close collaborations between WCM-Q and HMC to directly benefit doctors and, most importantly, our patients. CCM will not only help in diagnosing and assessing progression, but will also expedite the approval of new treatments for this debilitating condition.

“I am very grateful for the support I have received via the Biomedical Research Program of WCM-Q, which is funded by Qatar Foundation, as it provided the foundations for applying and securing this international grant.”

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q, said: “We are extremely gratified that this wonderful research has gained global recognition, not only for Dr. Malik and WCM-Q but also for our partners at Hamad Medical Corporation and for Qatar as a whole. “It is particularly pleasing that the research has such great potential for translation from the laboratory to the bedside where it could be of immense benefit to patients both in the Gulf and all over the world, as well as helping researchers to develop novel therapies more effectively. Indeed, this funding validates Qatar Foundation’s vision to support research infrastructure leading to such translational projects that will ultimately benefit the patient population in Qatar.”

Dr. Ashfaq Shuaib of HMC said: “We at HMC are extremely pleased to be involved in this important research with our colleagues at WCM-Q, and this award gives us all a great opportunity to continue to work together to develop a very effective new tool for diagnosing and assessing progression of MS.”
Healthcare in Tanzania

Two medical students from WCM-Q have spoken of their experiences in a Tanzanian hospital, where they encountered malaria, elephantiasis and schistosomiasis – a parasitic disease carried by freshwater snails.

Syeda Haider and Dalal Hussain, both in their second year of the medical curriculum, visited the East African country as part of WCM-Q’s Global Health and Research Experience Program (GHERP) supported and facilitated by the Institute for Population Health. The pair spent eight weeks in the city of Mwanza, on the edge of Lake Victoria, working under supervision at Weill Bugando Medical Center, which is affiliated with WCM in New York. The aim of the program is to expose students to healthcare in a low-income country, give them practical experience, and allow them to conduct mentored research.

Both Syeda and Dalal said it had been a fulfilling experience.

Syeda Haider and Dalal Hussain, both in their second year of the medical curriculum, visited the East African country as part of WCM-Q’s Global Health and Research Experience Program (GHERP) supported and facilitated by the Institute for Population Health. The pair spent eight weeks in the city of Mwanza, on the edge of Lake Victoria, working under supervision at Weill Bugando Medical Center, which is affiliated with WCM in New York. The aim of the program is to expose students to healthcare in a low-income country, give them practical experience, and allow them to conduct mentored research.

Both Syeda and Dalal said it had been a fulfilling experience.

Syeda said: “I was lost for direction before Tanzania but working in obstetrics/gynecology has been transformational for me. It was my first exposure to obstetrics and gynecology and I loved it! I stayed in this department for the majority of my time and it was a fantastic learning opportunity for me. I worked closely with a wonderful group of doctors and nurses. I loved it so much I even did a night shift and saw how different it is from working during the daytime.

“I learned to assess how the labor is proceeding, how to work out how much time there is before delivery and I probably got to see around 10 births each day.”

Syeda said that outside of the obstetrics department, she helped take samples from local villagers for research into schistosomiasis, which is endemic in Lake Victoria and is linked to increased vulnerability to HIV and certain cancers. She also saw a woman with elephantiasis, a disease that causes extensive swelling.

For Dalal, the eight-week placement allowed her to see conditions and diseases that she had only read about and learn many new skills.

These included learning how to measure a liver span, testing cranial nerves, understanding the x-rays of disseminated tuberculosis patients and mastering how to take people’s vital signs.
She said: “I had a lot of firsts on this trip; I witnessed a birth, I saw patients with jaundice, and I heard a heart murmur. It was a really worthwhile experience.”

Both girls said that there were challenges in Tanzania - not least the language, Swahili – but also power cuts and not having access to imaging and laboratories whereby diseases can be quickly diagnosed. This means that doctors must rely more on their examination skills and pay particular attention to what a patient tells them.

However, this is a key skill that physicians should master.

Dr. Sohaila Cheema, director of the Institute for Population Health at WCM-Q, said: “Healthcare in Tanzania is undoubtedly different from what our students will experience in Qatar or the United States; doctors have fewer resources and the reliance on technology is less. However, the ability to truly listen to what a patient is telling you, and extrapolate from the symptoms you see are vital skills for any physician and this is one of the key strengths of the learning trip to Tanzania.

“We are having departmental discussions to increase funding for the program so as to support additional students gain experience at our affiliate in Tanzania,” Dr. Cheema added.

Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, senior associate dean for population health and capacity building at WCM-Q, said: “The GHERP is a great experiential learning opportunity for students to understand how health is delivered in a low-income resource setting. The students learn about health systems, community and public health, they are exposed to new cultures and how to overcome communication challenges. The GHERP allows WCM-Q’s students to engage in global health, build partnerships and partake in a global dialogue between educators and students.”

The Global Health and Research Experience Program was officially launched by the then Division of Global and Public Health at WCM-Q in 2011 and is overseen by WCM in New York, which has physicians who are faculty at Weill Bugando.
Triplets become the latest siblings to study medicine at WCM-Q

Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar has always had a friendly, family atmosphere, but that has increased with the arrival of triplets onto the college’s six-year medical program.

The trio - Nada, Omar and Narjis Mhaimeed - join a host of other siblings at WCM-Q who have followed in the family footsteps to attend the college and become a doctor. The triplets’ mother was also a doctor so medicine and the desire to help others runs in the family.

However, even for WCM-Q, which prides itself on the number of students who come to the college following the experiences of an older brother or sister, attracting three siblings at the same time is an achievement.

The triplets, who are 17 and were born within a minute of each other, explained why they all chose to study at WCM-Q.

“This is really the best option for aspiring physicians because of the six-year program,” said Omar. “The course is centered around medicine as opposed to the US where you would have to complete an undergraduate degree first.”

Nada, the eldest, added: “The whole college is tailored towards medicine. You are surrounded by people exactly like yourself who have exactly the same goals and commitments.

“As to why we all came here, we all thought that it was the best option.”

But although the triplets may have many things in common – like their choice of career and choice of college – there are still plenty of distinctions that make them individuals. While Nada is interested in surgery and Omar is interested in sports medicine, Narjis, the youngest, is thinking of specializing in dermatology.

“I had acne problems when I was young,” she said, “and I’m just very interested in the skin.”

Nada added: “It’s the way that your appearance can really
change the way you go through life.”

Each also has their own academic strengths so three heads really will be better than one.

Narjis said: “We make a schedule and we all follow it and we help each other a lot. Plus, whoever become friends with us ends up doing the same thing.

“So far Weill Cornell has been really good. The professors are always available for you and it’s a great environment for people who are focused on learning.”

Med 2 student Tarek Taha said that having an older brother and sister – Med 3’s Sara Taha and Med 4’s Khalid Taha - already at WCM-Q, had meant that he applied to the college and embarked on a career in medicine with his eyes wide open, knowing both the positives and negatives.

Tarek said: “Obviously I had a lot of insight into what to expect for the next few years. Everything has its positive and negative sides and I knew about the rigorous structure of the pre-medical curriculum and the pressure I would be under. I think I had a more complete picture of what to expect.”

On the other hand, because his older siblings have been before him, Tarek has lots of support from his family, as they know how hard he has to work to succeed. He can also ask his brother and sister for advice and can see the lessons that he is currently learning being put into practice by them during their clinical rotations at Hamad Hospital.

He said: “I do have a lot of support and understanding and my parents can empathize as they have seen Sara and Khalid go through the same things. I can also get help from my brother and sister in terms of asking them what I should focus on and how I should approach a particular class. I can also see the long-term reasons for what I’m studying.”

For Khalid and Fahad Al Marri, having each other at the college means there is always someone there to offer support, aside from the faculty and staff.

Khalid is due to graduate in 2018 while Fahad will earn his US-accredited MD degree in 2019.

Khalid said: “Having a brother that is going through the same experiences and the same struggles you are having means that you are able to better support each other. Sometimes he might be better at a subject and sometimes you might be better so it makes it possible to help one another if one of you is struggling.

“Having your friend and brother in the same program is such a blessing, we are lucky that we are both together.”
E-health in the GCC

Students from WCM-Q have published the first and most comprehensive systematic review of e-health in the GCC.

E-health is an emerging best practice in modern healthcare in which the electronic delivery of health information and services over the internet can benefit healthcare practitioners, patients, and scientists in numerous ways.

The WCM-Q study surveyed the state of research into e-health in the GCC countries and located several research gaps where further studies are needed, such as cost-benefit analyses and more randomized controlled trials to demonstrate actual benefits of e-health initiatives in the region. The results were then published by the Royal Society of Medicine’s Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare, the number one ranked publication in its field.

Dr. Alan S. Weber, visiting associate professor of English at WCM-Q, led the research team, which comprised students Rebal Turjoman, Mu Ji Hwang, Faryal Malick, Farah Al Sayyed and Yanal Shaheen. Qatar’s leading role in developing new data privacy laws and secure networks was an important finding of the study.

“Researchers at ICTQatar, Qatar University and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar know that medical privacy and confidentiality are key patient concerns in the Muslim world,” Dr. Weber said. “Also, although a cybercriminal is probably not interested in intercepting the medical information of the average person on the Internet, the medical records of VIPs or the famous are highly sensitive information.”

Several studies have shown that patients are reluctant to use internet services related to medicine or banking if they feel that their private information could be stolen or misused. Most of the studies located by the authors were conducted in Saudi Arabia, which has a thriving research culture in medical informatics, telemedicine and e-health. Medical researchers in Saudi Arabia, as well as in Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and UAE, are very interested in understanding patient and doctor satisfaction with the new electronic medical records systems that are being implemented across the GCC. Such studies create a feedback loop in which problems in using the new technology can be identified and used to improve the service. For example, unreliable internet connections in a hospital can be a serious barrier to using electronic medical records since doctors will often resort to paper-based record keeping, and then enter the information later into a computer database, a process that wastes time and creates extra paperwork for the medical professional.

Another significant area of research in the GCC was online consumer health and health-information seeking behaviors. Learning about how patients and doctors seek and evaluate health information that they find on the internet can help ministries of health to develop culturally appropriate, accurate online sources of information, as well as e-services like appointment scheduling and health pamphlets.

Dr. Weber said: “E-health services are the future as more people use internet-enabled devices. They can be used to monitor health at home with remote sensors, send SMS health alerts when to take medicines, and even face-to-face meetings with doctors via chat software when patients have difficulty making it to the hospital or when they need to consult a highly specialized doctor in another country.”
Back: Yanal Shaheen and Dr. Alan Weber.
Front: Faryal Malick, Farah Al Sayyed and Mu Ji Hwang.
Dr. Ayman Al-Jurdi has been named Intern of the Year of his internal medicine residency program at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Dr. Al-Jurdi, who is in the second year of the residency program, was awarded the prize in recognition of his knowledge, mastery of the program material, and his dedication to his patients and the medical students he teaches.

Impressively, Dr. Al-Jurdi, aged 24, was chosen for the award from a cohort of approximately 50 residents.

Speaking from his new home on Manhattan’s Upper East Side, just across the street from NewYork Presbyterian, Dr. Al-Jurdi said: “I was very happy and surprised to win. To me, it was a really nice and unexpected reward for a year of hard work in terms of patient care, medical education for my students, and working on my research. But winning this prize was really only possible because of all the support I received from the program, my family and my friends, and the excellent education I received back in Qatar.”

Ayman, who has Lebanese heritage, was born and raised in Qatar. He completed the two-year Pre-Medical Program and the four-year Medical Program at WCM-Q, during which time he distinguished himself as a highly able student and a talented researcher. His education at WCM-Q, coupled with hard work, earned him a coveted place on the Weill Cornell Medical Center internal medicine residency program, competition for which is fierce.

Explaining his interest in internal medicine, Ayman said: “Internal medicine is a very cerebral field - it’s all about critical thinking and complex diagnosis and complex management, so it’s more of a thinking than a procedural field and that’s what attracted me to it. It’s very diverse and gives you opportunities to pursue careers in education, and in clinical care with several sub-specialties that you can go into.”

Ayman has a passion for the laboratory and spent last year focusing on gastroenterology research. “This year I’m focusing more on nephrology, so I’m really still exploring what I want to specialize in,” he said. “Fortunately, we get a lot of support here. It has been great: the education is excellent and they have very advanced technologies and some really state-of-the-art facilities.

He is also enjoying the diversity of his new environment and the learning opportunities it affords him. He explained: “Life here is very interesting because we all have different backgrounds, different cultures. There are lots of students and residents here from all over the world: I work with people from Colombia, Mexico, Kuwait – many, many different countries. And of course with people from all different parts of the US, from the West Coast, from the South, from Puerto Rico – from all over. So you learn a lot about different cultures. You also get to explore different kinds of food through meeting these people, which is great fun.

“It also gives you a global perspective about healthcare because medicine in different parts of the world is very different in terms of the diseases that are more prevalent and the way patient care is delivered. So you get to learn a lot from everyone’s different experiences.”

Although moving away from his family in Qatar took a little while to get used to, he is still surrounded by plenty of familiar faces: two of Ayman’s fellow Class of 2015 graduates – Dr. Tariq Chukir and Dr. Supriya Geradine – are in his class on the internal medicine residency program. He said: “In fact, there are lots of us flying the flag for WCM-Q here. There are two or three WCM-Q students in almost every class of the IM program, so I still feel a connection to Qatar and WCM-Q.”

He added: “I feel like we were very well prepared at WCM-Q for the challenges of the residency program. The medical education we received was excellent and the faculty based in Qatar and the visiting faculty from New York, plus the faculty from Hamad Hospital, they all had such high expectations of us and they challenged us to reach and exceed them, so when we came we were very able to adjust to the new system and do well.”
Excellence in healthcare in Qatar

An acknowledged leader of Qatar’s healthcare sector shared his expert knowledge of establishing world-class healthcare facilities in a presentation to fellow medical professionals at WCM-Q’s Grand Rounds.

His Excellency Dr. Mohammed G A Al Maadheed has held many key leadership roles in the development of Qatar’s rapidly growing healthcare sector in the past two decades.

Among many other achievements, Dr. Al Maadheed was instrumental in realizing the vision to establish a state-of-the-art, purpose-built orthopedic and sports medicine hospital in Qatar in his role as director general of Aspetar from 2003 to 2012, which attained international recognition when it was accredited as a FIFA Medical Centre of Excellence in 2009.

Speaking at WCM-Q to an audience of physicians, researchers, students and healthcare professionals, Dr. Al Maadheed explained the most effective strategies for setting up and managing healthcare facilities to achieve excellence in patient care and health outcomes.

In his presentation, entitled ‘Healthcare facilities: from a vision to recognition of excellence’, Dr. Al Maadheed said: “How do we plan these long-term projects? Well, unfortunately there is no manual that you can simply follow step-by-step because in every case your environment and circumstances will be different.

“The approach I have developed is to divide my project into three phases: a project phase, a commissioning phase and an operational phase. Now, the key point is that the structure of the organization changes to meet the challenges of each successive phase, so the delivery vehicle adapts as the project develops. You must have this flexibility because otherwise, when the project moves forwards, you will be left with an organization that is set up to meet the previous set of challenges, which no longer exist.”

Dr. Al Maadheed was also the director general and project director of the Anti-Doping Lab Qatar, which was inaugurated in December 2012 and received World Anti-Doping Association (WADA) accreditation in 2015, and he continues to provide stewardship as the chairman of the Board of Trustees. Since 2010 he has been director general and project director of a new ‘greenfield’ state-of-the-art medical facility for addiction treatment and rehabilitation in Qatar.

Dr. Al Maadheed, who is also active in the humanitarian field and is president of Qatar Red Crescent, said that it was important never to lose focus of the moral and ethical responsibilities that come with working in healthcare. He said: “Excellence in all projects is vital, but in healthcare it is even more important because there is such a strong moral dimension. In healthcare, as with humanitarian work, you must be absolutely dedicated to achieving 100 percent efficiency and effectiveness, because any less than this carries a risk that someone will be harmed.

“So you need to have that moral dimension within yourself and this goes beyond the technical dimensions of any project. You must see excellence as a moral value and as a personal mission.”
Experts discuss best practice for arthritis

Rheumatologists and experts in guideline development met to agree on common guidelines for ensuring high quality treatment for patients in the region with rheumatoid arthritis.

WCM-Q coordinated the three-day summit that brought together experts from ten different countries to adapt the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) 2015 Rheumatoid Arthritis guidelines to the MENA region.

The delegates combined their in-depth knowledge of the different healthcare systems and cultures of the region with the most recent evaluation of the available research evidence to decide how best to adapt the ACR Guidelines to ensure patients in the region receive the very best possible care.

Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, associate professor of medicine and associate dean for continuing professional development at WCM-Q, and a practicing rheumatologist, said: “The medications that are now available to treat rheumatoid arthritis can be extremely effective and often allow patients to live full lives with significantly reduced levels of pain and joint damage. We are very keen to adapt the latest recommendations for our region to ensure patients here receive the full benefit of these modern therapies while taking into consideration their values and preferences.”

Held at the W Hotel in West Bay, the ‘Adaptation of the Rheumatoid Arthritis Guidelines for the Eastern Mediterranean Region’ event was organized by WCM-Q and the AUB GRADE Center and funded by Qatar National...
Research Fund (QNRF), a member of Qatar Foundation and WCM-Q.

In attendance were senior rheumatologists and guideline adaptation experts working in Qatar, the United States, Canada, Lebanon, Egypt, the UAE, Jordan, Oman, Denmark and Saudi Arabia. Many of the delegates who attended are members of the Middle East Rheumatoid Arthritis Consortium (MERAC), a research group based at WCM-Q whose mission is to improve the care of patients with inflammatory rheumatic diseases in the MENA region.

In three days of presentations the delegates, guided by the ACR 2015 Rheumatoid Arthritis guidelines, reviewed scientific studies of patient outcomes and discussed the impact of contextual factors such as the varying cost of medication and the unique characteristics of the different healthcare systems throughout the region.

Dr. Samar Al Razaq Al-Emadi, senior consultant in internal medicine/rheumatology at Hamad Medical Corporation and assistant professor of clinical medicine at WCM-Q, a founding member of MERAC, said: “We have more and better treatments available for rheumatoid arthritis and to make the best of them for patients we need to tailor these important guidelines according to our local needs in the Arab world.”

Dr. Jasvinder Singh, professor of medicine and epidemiology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and chair of the ACR 2015 Rheumatoid Arthritis Guidelines, was in attendance at the event to help with their adaptation for the MENA Region.

Dr. Singh said: “The purpose of developing guidelines is to make available to patients, physicians and policy makers the best possible guidance, determined by reviewing the very best science available and reaching a consensus among leading physician-scientists, practicing physicians, patients and other stakeholders. Adapting these guidelines to local needs is very important to help patients and doctors in the region manage rheumatoid arthritis as effectively as possible.”

Through a series of panel discussions, the delegates reached agreement on the form and content of the adapted ACR Guidelines for the MENA region that will soon be published.

Dr. Elie Akl, professor of medicine at the American University of Beirut (AUB), and director of the AUB GRADE Center described this as a pioneering work in the region. “We had all ingredients for success: basing the project on internationally recognized guidelines, using a leading guideline adaptation methodology, involving international as well as regional experts, and high-level organization,” he said.

Dr. Arayssi said: “We are all pleased to have had extremely productive discussions leading to a very strong consensus of the best way to implement the ACR Guidelines for our region.

“We feel these measures will be of great value to patients, health care providers and other stakeholders as we work together to ensure treatment of rheumatoid arthritis across the region reaches a consistently high standard. We are very grateful to QNRF, and all of the attendees for making this happen.”
Dentists and diabetes

Dentists are ideally placed to spot undiagnosed cases of diabetes because of an often overlooked link between diabetes and gum disease, a two-day practical workshop held at WCM-Q heard.

Visiting expert Dr. Hatem Algraffee, a specialist periodontist and lecturer based in London, explained that diabetes patients have an increased risk of suffering gum disease.

Speaking at the Periodontal Disease: From Screening to Management workshop at WCM-Q, Dr. Algraffee said: “The prevalence of diabetes across the Gulf region is high and growing, and it is estimated that up to 40 percent of cases remain undiagnosed.

“Because gum disease is more common among diabetes patients, dentists have a key role to play in helping to identify those who might have undiagnosed diabetes. Dentists should refer patients with gum disease to physicians to be tested for diabetes, and physicians should refer diabetes patients to dentist to help treat or prevent gum disease. Working in tandem like this will allow us to provide better overall care and identify some cases of diabetes that have been missed.”

Coordinated by WCM-Q’s Division of Continuing Professional Development, the workshop offered dentists, dental nurses, dental assistants and oral hygienists practical instruction on a wide range of issues related to periodontal disease.

These included how to screen and assess patients with periodontal disease, how to identify a tooth affected by periodontal disease, and strategies for coordinating successful treatment plans. There were also discussions about the prevalence of diabetes and its association with periodontal disease and a demonstration of techniques that can be used to address periodontal disease. This included a demonstration of crown lengthening, a key surgical procedure in which gum tissue surrounding a tooth is carefully incised to expose more of the tooth and allow for it to be repaired.

Periodontal disease is extremely widespread and is estimated to be one of the ten most prevalent diseases globally. Dr. Algraffee explained that more than 80 percent of people worldwide are affected by some form of periodontal (gum) disease including gingivitis, with around 15 percent of the population suffering from advanced gum disease.

He said: “Periodontal disease is very common and can cause people great discomfort through loss of teeth, trouble eating, loss of self-confidence, speech problems and general loss of quality of life. These factors can be very upsetting and painful for people so it is crucial that we take dental health seriously.”

Dr. Algraffee said that the most important factor to protect one’s dental health is to find a dentist and have regular checks ups, in addition to brushing well two times each day. He also said that seeing a dental hygienist is important, and that Qatar has recently invested in training hygienists.

The activity was an Accredited Group Learning Activity (Category 1) as defined by the Qatar Council for Healthcare Practitioners – Accreditation Department and was approved for a maximum of 11 hours.

Deema Al-Sheikhly, director of continuing professional development at WCM-Q, said: “We are delighted to welcome such a well-qualified specialist periodontist as Dr. Algraffee to WCM-Q to offer dental health professionals in Qatar the most up-to-date practical guidance on periodontal screening and treatment. It is extremely important to take periodontal disease seriously, not only to protect oral health, but also to help identify undiagnosed diabetes.”
Dr. Algraffee said patients with gum disease should be tested for diabetes.
Wearing the white coat for the first time is a symbolic step towards becoming a doctor.
The college’s new cohort of trainee doctors took a symbolic first step towards their chosen profession as they donned the physician’s traditional garb in a ceremony held at Hamad Bin Khalifa University Student Center.

The students of the Class of 2020 took to the stage in front of an audience of their friends and family at the WCM-Q Opening Exercises ceremony where they were presented with their new white coats and stethoscopes.

The ceremonial presentation of the white coats has become a tradition at WCM-Q and carries special symbolic significance as it marks the moment students begin the four-year Medical Program, which involves working directly with patients. This year, the Medical Program has admitted 40 students of 14 different nationalities. In total, 35 percent of the students joining the Medical Program are Qatari nationals.

The ceremony also welcomed 50 students joining WCM-Q’s recently launched and cohesive six-year Medical Program, which integrates two years of pre-medical training and the four-year Medical Program. The class comprises students of 12 different nationalities, and 38 percent of the students are Qatari nationals.

The ceremony also marks the culmination of WCM-Q’s Orientation Program, which introduces students joining the college’s Foundation, Pre-medical and Medical Programs to their new classmates, faculty and the facilities at WCM-Q.

During orientation, the new students participated in ‘Icebreaker’ sessions, joined Q&A panel discussions on career development with qualified physicians, toured the state-of-the-art facilities at WCM-Q, learned more about the curriculum and gained advice about learning...
strategies, health and safety in the medical environment and legal issues in medicine, among other subjects.

Addressing the audience at the event, Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of our new students to WCM-Q and to present to them their very first white coat and stethoscope, both of which are such powerful symbols of our profession and the practice of medicine.

“Pulling on the white coat for the first time is a big moment for all doctors. It is the moment at which they begin to work with patients and to acquire the practical skills and know-how they need to provide real care and to start making a positive difference to the community. In short, it is the point at which they start to feel they are becoming real doctors.

“I am sure the Class of 2020 and their families will remember this special moment for many years to come.”

The Class of 2020 will now spend four years training in all aspects of medicine from faculty members based in Qatar and also from Weill Cornell Medicine in New York. If successful they will then receive a US medical degree.

They will also gain experience working directly with patients at WCM-Q’s clinical affiliate Hamad Medical Corporation, and they will have the opportunity to work in clinics at NewYork Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York City, one of the world’s foremost university hospitals.

Nasser Binmarzook, aged 21, is beginning the Medical Program, having just completed the Pre-medical Program at WCM-Q. He said: “Putting on the white coat for the very first time is incredibly exciting and inspiring, and a little intimidating at the same time because it carries a lot of responsibility.

“Knowing we worked so hard for two years to have the privilege of wearing the white coat gives us a real sense of achievement and it gives us inspiration to meet the challenges of the next four years of study. I am looking forward to that challenge.” •
WCM-Q’s Shahrad Taheri spoke about the significant impact the built environment has on health on the first day of Qatar Sustainability Week.

Dr. Taheri, professor of medicine and assistant dean for clinical investigations, said that research has shown that the layout of towns and cities and the quality of individual buildings can affect our feelings of wellbeing, stress levels, how much exercise we take, our quality of sleep, the quality of the air we breathe and many other factors that determine our overall health and wellbeing.

The built environment therefore plays a key role in the prevalence of lifestyle-related conditions such as obesity, type-2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease, among others, he explained.

Speaking at the Qatar Green Building Conference, held at Qatar National Convention Centre Dr. Taheri said: “We spend an average of 20 hours per day inside buildings and the quality of the built environment around us has been proven to have important effects on our happiness and health. If we are to reverse the trend of increasing rates of obesity and type-2 diabetes, which are some of the most pressing health issues facing us today, it is crucial we understand how we can use good design and planning to encourage good health.”

Qatar Sustainability Week is an initiative of Qatar Green Building Council and provides opportunities for the community to engage in a wide range of sustainability-oriented activities.
Dr. Taheri, an expert on obesity, diabetes and the science of sleep, said that the plentiful availability of green space, good public transport links, walkable urban environments, good air quality and protection from noise pollution all positively impact health.

“If people are able to walk from their home to work, from their work to the shops, and from their child’s school to the park they will naturally take more exercise each day,” he said. “Similarly, if we can use public transport to travel widely around a city we naturally walk more than if we just take the car from A to B. These small amounts of physical activity that we take by walking from place to place really do add up and you would be surprised what a positive impact this has on the health of the whole community.

“Additionally, good quality housing with low levels of ambient noise help us to get a good night’s sleep, which also has a very significant positive impact on health.”

Dr. Taheri praised the construction of Qatar’s metro system, the steadily growing number of parks and green spaces, and the intelligent design of the Msheireb Downtown Doha project, currently under construction, which will feature a web of interconnected, covered pedestrian walkways to allow people to travel through the district easily and comfortably without using their car.

Dr. Taheri also praised Qatar Green Building Council for incorporating the health of the community into its understanding of sustainable building design and urban planning.

He said: “It is often overlooked just how much buildings impact our health but a well-designed city with aesthetically pleasing, well ventilated buildings helps us to breathe clean air, sleep better, feel less stressed, walk more and to be happier and healthier.”
Growing a biomedical R&D industry

Biomedical researchers and industry representatives from across the globe met to discuss strategies for translating innovation from the laboratory to the marketplace at WCM-Q’s Industry Academia Interactions event.

Held in collaboration with Qatar Foundation, Qatar National Research Fund, Sidra Medical and Research Center and Qatar Science and Technology Park, the event explored ways to foster productive partnerships among researchers, funding institutions and businesses in order to develop commercially viable Intellectual Property (IP), a key aim of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The two-day event at the Hilton Hotel featured presentations by academic and industry experts on issues such as research funding, development of new pharmaceuticals, encouraging biotech startups, building a knowledge economy, investment in the biomedical sector in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and startup incubation.
Opening the event, Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “The pace of change in Qatar’s knowledge-based economy has been incredibly swift - in the past decade the country has built a level of capacity in research and development that took more than 100 years in the countries of the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). This rapid growth and development is what makes Qatar such an exciting place to work.

“Through the Industry Academia Interactions event we aim to facilitate relationships that will help translate Qatar’s capacity for research into new ventures that will make significant and sustainable contributions to the growing hi-tech sector here.” Dr. Sheikh spoke on ‘Guideposts for Angel Investors in Biomed Sectors in the MENA Region’.

The international group of expert speakers included Dr. Hsiao D. Lieu, managing director of Chorus, the integrated clinical research division of Lilly Research Laboratories, a global pharmaceutical research and development organization; Dr. Bruce Conway, program director of the Robertson Therapeutic Development Fund and faculty member at the Clinical Center for Translational Science at The Rockefeller University, New York; and Dr. Danny Ramadan, acting director of strategic research and technology investment advisor at QSTP, among many others.

Dr. Louis Herlands, executive director of Sidra Ventures business development and external relations at Sidra Medical and Research Center, is responsible for the commercial development of technologies emanating from Sidra. Dr. Herlands, who gave a presentation titled ‘Reduced Risk Biotech Startups’, specializes in assessing the commercial viability of early-stage technologies and establishing productive collaborations at the intersection between academia, entrepreneurship, finance and industry.

The event included multiple panel discussions where local and international experts tackled the issues of translation of research findings in the biomedical arena to commercially viable entities in Qatar, the Gulf and regionally. Multiple novel and creative paths were suggested and discussed and will form an important framework for future work in this area.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q said: “With the support of Qatar Foundation, the research program at WCM-Q has become a regional center of excellence in biomedical research, leading to important and valuable discoveries in many fields. Gatherings like the Industry Academia Interactions event provide a platform where influential people from industry can interact with talented researchers, which we believe can foster strategic partnerships that will drive innovation and the creation of commercially viable new Intellectual Property.

“In this way, we believe the center of excellence established at WCM-Q can make a significant and important contribution to the mission to diversify Qatar’s economy.”

Dr. Khlaed Machaca said WCM-Q’s research program is now a regional center for excellence.
Advances in cancer care

WCM-Q alumnus Dr. Muhamed Baljević returned to the college to discuss his research in multiple myeloma, a form of blood cancer, for the latest installment of WCM-Q’s Grand Rounds.

Dr. Baljević, who graduated from WCM-Q in 2010, is now assistant professor of medicine at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, home to one of the leading cancer research centers in the US.

Multiple myeloma is a cancer of plasma cells that are found in the soft, sponge-like marrow in the center of all bones. Plasma cells are a type of white blood cell that produce antibodies, which are essential for the body’s immune system to function correctly. Symptoms of multiple myeloma include reduced resistance to infections, weakened bones that fracture easily, anemia, increased bruising and bleeding, fatigue, weight loss and kidney dysfunction. While treatments are improving all the time, the condition cannot yet be cured, with patients living for between one and 20 years after diagnosis.

Dr. Baljević said: “Multiple myeloma is the second most common hematologic malignancy behind non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and it is estimated that there will be more than 30,000 newly diagnosed cases in the USA in 2016.

“The good news is that the data show us that survival rates have improved a great deal but there is still room for more improvement. New and promising drugs are in the testing phase and I am excited to be involved in this research, which we hope will lead to improved patient outcomes.”

Dr. Baljević, who is originally from Bosnia and Herzegovina, was offered an Emiri scholarship in 2001 to come to Doha and finish high school at Qatar Academy, a member of Qatar Foundation. The scholarship was extended as a university academic scholarship for pre-medical and medical studies at WCM-Q, where he graduated from with honors in research. Since graduation Dr. Baljević has completed residency training in internal medicine at the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York, and fellowship training in hematology and medical oncology at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

In addition to his fellowship training, he pursued a Master of Science degree in clinical and translational research at the university of Texas graduate school of biomedical sciences, with the aim of receiving additional training required for a role as principal investigator on cancer clinical trials, a longstanding ambition. Happily, Dr. Baljević is now looking forward to leading his first clinical trial which will investigate the efficacy of new drug combinations for treating multiple myeloma in patients who develop resistance to proteasome inhibitors. The trial is titled A Phase I/II Study of the c-Met Inhibitor Cabozantinib as a Targeted Strategy to Reverse Resistance to the Proteasome Inhibitor Carfilzomib in Refractory Multiple Myeloma.

Dr. Baljević added: “Fulfilling my dream of being involved in development of novel therapies for patients with hematologic malignancies simply would not have been possible without the generous support I received from Qatar. Returning to Doha feels like coming home and I feel tremendously grateful for the truly life-changing opportunities Qatar has granted me.”

Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, senior associate dean for medical education and continuing professional development at WCM-Q, said: “We are delighted to welcome Dr. Baljević back to become the first WCM-Q graduate to speak at Grand Rounds. His experience is a great example of Qatar and WCM-Q’s commitment to realize human potential by supporting talented individuals, for the benefit of the whole community.”
Dr. Muhamed Baljević currently works at the University of Nebraska Medical Center but said returning to Doha felt like returning home.
The challenges of providing mental health services in a growing and diverse community were discussed at a seminar organized by WCM-Q and hosted by Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC).

The purpose of the Mental Health Care, Law and Patients’ Rights seminar was to bring together various stakeholders, including medical and health professionals, legal and social services, law enforcement and others, to find ways to work together to meet the mental healthcare requirements of Qatar’s diverse and growing community.

Dr. Sunanda Holmes, associate university counsel & assistant professor of healthcare policy and research at WCM-Q, said: “Provision of high quality and appropriate mental healthcare services is a global challenge. By working together we can identify the service gaps and educate the various stakeholders in global best practices.
to ensure prompt, respectful and effective care for those in need. There are lessons to be learned from each other and candid dialogue about mental illness and challenges can go a long way in reducing stigma for patients and their families."

Dr. Suhaila Ghuloum, senior consultant at the psychiatry department at HMC, played a key role in the organization of the seminar and was also one of the speakers at the event. Dr. Ghuloum underscored the importance of providing access to adequate and appropriate mental health services, and identified the challenges facing Qatar. These include the need for continued investment in infrastructure, recruitment and training of personnel, the need to overcome barriers to access, and the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework to protect the rights of both service providers and users.

Dr. Ghuloum also advised the audience about the Fifth Qatar International Mental Health Conference, that was organized by HMC and at which these complex issues were addressed.

The nature of Qatar’s diverse, constantly changing and growing population presents many challenges for medical professionals, their patients and other stakeholders. Language barriers, varying social and cultural attitudes to mental illness, difficulty accessing medical notes, transient living and working habits, and the responsibility to provide mental health services to patients who may be vulnerable, confused, reluctant to accept help, or in detention, are just some of the challenges.

Dr. Ghuloum said: “The purpose of a legal framework is the protection of patients and their rights, as well as the safety of the whole society, and considerable progress has been made towards an overall mental health law in Qatar. Such a legal framework will guide the practice of mental health care and give each stakeholder clarity about their rights and responsibilities. Ultimately, this will improve both access to care and quality of care for patients."

The other speakers at the seminar were Dr. Aicha Hind Rifai, assistant professor of clinical psychiatry, WCM-Q; Dr. Mohammed Abdelalaim, senior consultant general adult psychiatry, HMC; Mr. Iain Tulley, chief executive officer, Mental Health Service, HMC; and Dr. Abdullah El Mamoun, head of quality assurance, Ministry of Interior.

Held in the Hajar Auditorium at HMC’s Medical Education Center, the seminar was part of a series of WCM-Q seminars on the intersection between law and medicine, which began in March 2015.
Mapping the Qatari genome

Qatar now has its own population-specific genome resource after researchers at WCM-Q mapped the genomes of more than 1,000 Qatari nationals.

This resource gives scientists a powerful reference tool that will facilitate efforts to identify genetic variations that cause serious and distressing conditions such as cystic fibrosis, sickle cell anemia and muscular dystrophy among the local population.

The new resource will also help doctors treating Qatari nationals to more effectively practice ‘precision medicine,’ which involves analyzing a patient’s genome in order to more effectively predict, diagnose and treat disease. Furthermore, better understanding of the subtle variations in Qatari genomes will help researchers discover how certain ancestral genetic traits interact with environmental factors such as poor diet, lack of exercise and smoking to cause disease.

The completion of the project is an important milestone in a new phase of genetic research, which has progressed from mapping the entire human genome – first achieved in 2003 after 13 years of painstaking investigation – to focusing on specific populations to identify correlations between shared heritage and susceptibility to particular diseases. This project is considered the most significant resource of genetic variants in any Arab population to date.

The project is part of a series of research studies investigating the Qatari population led by Dr. Ronald Crystal, chairman of genetic medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York and one of the world’s leading genetic researchers.

Dr. Crystal said: “This study is the first step in the development of precision medicine in Qatar. Our genes decide how we respond to our environment and our risk for disease, and the variations in our genes are different for each population. With this initial description of the Qatari genome as a basis, and with future refinements to be made by the Qatari Genome Project, we now have the basis for defining the genetic risk of the Qatari population for disease, and how Qataris will respond to medical therapies.”

The research team gathered samples anonymously from a total of more than 1,000 Qatari nationals at Hamad Medical Corporation clinics and then used the advanced computing technology in the lab of the WCM-Q Genomics Core to analyze and map the genomes of each individual.

Earlier projects in the series identified three broad genomic groups within the Qatari population, termed Q1, Q2 and Q3. Q1 are largely Bedouins, while Q2 are a Persian or South Asian mixture, and Q3 are Qataris with sub-Saharan African heritage. In the latest study, higher resolution of ancestry was achieved; for example, individuals of Persian ancestry can now be distinguished from individuals of South Asian ancestry. This genetic diversity is important to recognize and understand as each group is likely to be susceptible to different conditions and react to environmental hazards in different ways.

Until now, researchers have usually attempted to identify disease-causing genetic variations by using powerful computers to compare the genomes of affected individuals with a global genome resource and searching for telltale differences between the two. Unfortunately, comparing the genomes of Qatari nationals with the global genome is problematic because the computer identifies many
thousands of ‘false positives’ - tiny variations that may appear rare relative to the global genome average but are in fact very common among individuals of similar ancestries to the affected patient. Sorting the harmless variations from the harmful ones is a monumental task involving careful checking of vast amounts of complex genetic code.

The new population-specific resource mitigates this problem for Qatari nationals by providing a Qatari-specific genome resource, compiled from more than 1,000 Qataris whose families have enjoyed good health for at least three generations, that is a far more effective basis for comparison than the global resource. This is particularly true of one of the largest global resources, the 1000 Genomes Project, which contains no representation of people from the Arab World. Given the shared heritage of Qatar’s population with people in other parts of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), the new Qatar Genome reference could also benefit patients right across the region.

Qatar-based human genetics expert Dr. Khalid Fakhro, an investigator at Sidra Medical and Research Center and an assistant professor in the Department of Genetic Medicine at WCM-Q, is the lead author of this study.

He said: “One of the reasons genetics is complicated is that in the genomes of every population we look at we find there are millions of mutations, yet most of these do not actually cause disease - they appear to be harmless. So when a person with disease shows up in the clinic, it is more difficult than people imagine to identify the few potentially harmful mutations in a sea of mostly harmless variation.

“One way around this is the type of population-specific genome resource that we have created for the Qatari population. Because many of the same harmless mutations are shared by members of the same population, using a population-specific resource makes it easier to identify abnormal mutations in the genome that do cause disease. Specifically, if we find a mutation shared by patients but it has never been observed in more than 1,000 ethnically-matched controls, we have higher confidence in its possible pathogenicity.

The group of WCM-Q research projects investigating the Qatar Genome has benefited from support from Qatar Foundation and Qatar National Research Fund.

Dr. Crystal added: “This research has proven to be extremely exciting and worthwhile, not only for the new discoveries we have made but because there is great potential for clinical applications that will be of benefit to patients in Qatar and the wider region. We are very grateful for the support provided by Qatar National Research Fund and Qatar Foundation, without which this research could not have been undertaken.”
Moza Al-Hail with WCM-Q laboratory manager Harald Mubarak.
A summer of science

Two Qatari high school students spent the summer learning research administration skills at WCM-Q thanks to a new internship program launched by the college.

Students Moza Al-Hail and Hissa Al-Fakhri, both 17, gained valuable work experience, skills and knowledge on the four-week intensive Research Internships for National High School Students program.

Both students said the program had been inspiring as well as educational.

“I have had such a great time here and learned so much,” said Moza, who is a senior at Al Maha Academy. “I discovered that there is much more to research than what goes on in the lab. We learned about the grants procedure, ethics in research, how laboratories and research institutes are structured and managed, and the procedures that must be followed to ensure health and safety in the labs. It has been fascinating.”

As part of the program, which is administered by WCM-Q’s Research Division, the students also took classes on time-management techniques, self-directed study skills and how to prepare strong college applications.

Hissa, a senior at Michael E. DeBakey High School for Health Professions, added: “Learning about the college application procedure was really useful for us now that we are going into our senior year.”

The Research Internships for National High School Students program targets high school nationals who are 16 years old and above and are interested in scientific research. The ultimate goal is to increase the number of Qatars pursing careers in science and research, and so enhance the research capacity of the country in order to help fulfill the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. The program also counts towards students’ voluntary community service hours, with students who complete the course logging 100 hours of service.

For Hissa, the internship program was a great opportunity to explore what type of career she wants to pursue. “I have multiple interests across the sciences and social sciences so it has been great to be able to explore them here at WCM-Q. For example, during the program we had some sessions about sleep research, which I found really interesting because it combines medical science, psychology and the social sciences. I was really inspired to discover there are areas of research that combine different subjects like this.”

For Moza, the course helped her confirm her passion for medicine. “It is amazing that I had this opportunity and I am so glad I came here. Everyone was really friendly and it was not intimidating at all. Medicine is definitely my first choice.”

Moza was also gratified that a standardized operating procedure she devised to help researchers book lab time was so effective that the Research Division is now using it.

Shaikha AlQahtani, senior research training specialist at WCM-Q, said: “The aim is to give students a real, hands-on experience of research administration. They work closely with our researchers and administrative staff and have the opportunity to make real contributions as well as observing the work going on in the labs.

“We have been really impressed by the effort and dedication shown by Hissa and Moza. We hope that many more Qatari nationals will take advantage of the opportunity to come to WCM-Q to join the Research Internships for National High School Students.”

Students who enroll on the program can opt for full- or part-time versions of the course to accommodate family commitments. Students can also vary the length of the course and their start and end dates.
Trainee doctors discovered the trials and tribulations of examining young children as they took part in Cornell Stars, part of the Introductory Clerkship program.

The program is held every year and offers students the chance to get used to dealing with young children in a clinical environment. All of the young ‘patients’ are children of WCM-Q faculty and staff, who volunteer their services.

This year 42 second year medical students participated, observing senior pediatricians from WCM-Q, Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Sidra Medical and Research Center.

The aim of the program, which was held in the Clinical Skills Center, is not only to help the students become technically proficient, but also to let them develop the interpersonal skills needed to keep young patients calm and happy during a check-up. In addition, it helps the child to comply and cooperate when being examined so they are more relaxed during future visits to the doctor.

Dr. Amal Khidir, associate professor of pediatrics,
coordinates the Cornell Stars program.

Dr. Khidir said: “Examining and diagnosing children is a very different process from that of an adult. Very young children are often unable to tell you what is wrong, so physicians must rely far more on observation to diagnose the problem.

Learning these skills is vital, but so is the interpersonal relationship that you have with the child; you must be able to evaluate and assess their mood and personality because both of these factors may mean that you adjust your approach.

“The Cornell Stars program is so important to the development of our students as fully-rounded doctors, and once again I would like to thank all of the parents and children who took part for their valuable support, as well as our colleagues for sharing their time and experience: Dr. Barbara Blackie from Sidra, and HMC’s Dr. Amira Mustafa, Dr. Manasik Hassan, Dr. Lukman Abdurrahim, Dr. Amal Haidar, along with WCM-Q’s Dr. Marcellina Mian.”

The Cornell Stars event comes as the students prepare for clinical rotations at HMC.

Sara Hassen was one of those who took part and said that at first it was a nerve-wracking situation.

She said: “It was intimidating but a good experience to have before heading off to HMC. The first child we saw was just one-year-old and the second child was three. The three-year-old was much easier to examine, as they were able to follow instructions.

“You definitely need to be more observant with children as you can’t get what you need from communication; you need to be really sharp and notice things.”

Classmate Imen Becetti also took part in Cornell Stars and as she is interested in pursuing a residency in pediatrics, it was an opportunity for her to learn more about the different creative techniques that pediatricians use to get the information they need from a child.

Imen said: “It was really exciting. I’m personally interested in pediatrics so I wanted to see how I would interact with children in a professional setting and how I would go about the different medical procedures.

“It was difficult at first but with the help of Dr. Marcellina Mian it went smoothly and she showed us tricks that help with carrying out the various examinations we wanted to do.

“Working with children is definitely more fun than examining adults.”
Studying the health benefits of dates

Researchers at WCM-Q are using state-of-the-art technologies to discover the health-promoting properties of a food that has special significance for Muslims during the holy month of Ramadan – the date.

While it is well-known that the natural sugars in date fruits make them an ideal food to break one’s fast, perhaps less well-known is that they contain large amounts of phytochemicals – naturally occurring plant chemicals that can lower cholesterol, reduce the risk of heart disease, and have anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-cancer, neuroprotective and antioxidant properties, among other benefits.

Now researchers at WCM-Q who work in the relatively new field of metabolomics - the holistic study of the biochemical transformations in the human body - are using advanced techniques to analyze the health-promoting phytochemicals contained in two of the region’s most popular date varieties: the moist, reddish-brown khalas, common in the GCC including Qatar and popularly known as the ‘queen of dates’; and the deglet noor cultivar popular in North African countries such as Tunisia and Algeria.

Researcher Sweety Mathew, WCM-Q project specialist in food science and health, explained: “Dates are known to contain phytochemicals such as flavonoids, carotenoids, polyphenols, phytoestrogens and sterols, all of which can have quite profound beneficial effects on human health. We are interested in finding out which of the ‘healthy’ molecules actually end up in the human body when someone eats dates.

“And further, we want to know how differences in the phytochemical content of the two date varieties impact the human metabolism and therefore human health. So rather than looking at the fiber, minerals and vitamins contained in the dates, we conducted experiments to analyze the presence and changes of phytochemicals in the blood of volunteers who ate dates after fasting for 12 hours. We then compared the outcome of this experiment to one with participants who consumed only a pure sugar drink. This approach was inspired by an essential step performed in the pharmaceutical industry, where a new drug undergoes rigorous testing before it is released in the markets: one of their primary aims is to prove drug ‘bioavailability’ by showing that a drug actually appears in the blood stream of the volunteers after consumption. Here, we applied the same principle by conducting a clinical trial with dates as the ‘drug’. On completion of our analysis, we will be able to say which of the date phytonutrients were actually metabolized by the volunteers and are therefore having a beneficial effect on the human body.”

Dr. Stephen Atkin, professor of medicine at WCM-Q and an authority on diabetes and obesity research, has a special interest in these plant-derived compounds, especially phytoestrogens. He said: “There are four classes of phytoestrogens: isoflavones, stilbenes, lignans and coumestans. The isoflavones, in particular genistein and daidzein, are of interest due to their high concentration in soy products and the purported health benefits of improving diabetes, and reducing the risk of endocrine-related conditions such as osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, menopausal symptoms and breast and prostate cancer. It has been found that date fruit have the second highest levels of these phytoestrogens of any fruit.

“Dates may, therefore, have significant health benefits if incorporated into a healthy diet.”
The research team enrolled 21 healthy volunteers to take part in the study and took blood samples from them after they had fasted for 12 hours. They then gave them a substantial amount of deglet noor dates to eat, and took five blood samples at half-hourly intervals. A week later, the volunteers returned to the clinic and the process was repeated with khalas dates. As a control experiment, the same process was also conducted with a glucose drink containing only sugar.

Dr. Karsten Suhre, professor of physiology and biophysics at WCM-Q, said: “We have now collected all of the samples and we are currently analyzing them to see what the effect of eating dates is on the human metabolism. This is very exciting because it could potentially provide insight into which varieties of date fruits have higher concentrations of beneficial phytochemicals, which would allow us to make better dietary recommendations to help people protect their health.”

Date palms are an extremely important crop in the Middle East as they are extremely well adapted to dry, sandy environments. This project is part of a long and continuing interest that WCM-Q researchers have in the date palm. In 2012 they were awarded a National Priorities Research Program – Exceptional Proposals grant from Qatar National Research Fund to advance research efforts in basic research, translational and clinical research on date palms. WCM-Q researchers have also created the first known ‘Dates Bio-Bank’ which records the characteristics of more than 250 different varieties of date fruits collected from 15 countries, including Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Pakistan, Libya, Tunisia, USA, Morocco, Jordan, Sudan, Oman and Spain. Of these, the researchers have metabolically characterized 110 date fruit varieties. In the future, by combing this data with the results from the new bioavailability study, it shall be possible to predict the specific health benefits of each date variety.

Dr. Joel Malek, director of the genomics core at WCM-Q, who is actively involved in date palm research, led a team that mapped the entire genome of the plant for the very first time in 2008. In doing so the team discovered that it is possible to use genome analysis to determine the gender of date palms when the plant is young, which is commercially significant because only the female trees bear fruit. Traditionally, trees grown from seed require approximately six to eight years to flower before gender can be determined.

Dr. Malek said: “Since we have already sequenced the entire genome of the khalas date cultivar and will soon complete sequencing of the deglet noor cultivar, the clinical trial of the date fruits study, along with metabolomics and genomics studies, will enhance a holistic understanding of the date fruits. To our knowledge, this has not been attempted before, and we believe it will pave the way to maximizing the link between date palm horticulture and human health.”

Researchers are examining the effects that two different types of date have on metabolism and health.
Researchers at WCM-Q have conducted a comprehensive study to determine the cancer risk posed by smoking from a water-pipe.

While the risks of smoking cigarettes are well known, the cancer risk associated with smoking from a water-pipe - also known as shisha, hookah and ‘hubble bubble’ - remain poorly understood.

A team of researchers led by WCM-Q’s Dr. Ravinder Mamtani and Dr. Sohaila Cheema, used a sophisticated meta-analysis technique to review 28 published scientific studies and examined the relationship between water-pipe smoking and various forms of cancer, including cancer of the head and neck, esophagus, stomach, lung and bladder.

Dr. Mamtani, senior associate dean for population health and capacity building, said the need for such a study had become urgent in recent years owing to the surge in popularity of shisha, especially among young people and women.

He said: “There are many studies examining the risks of cigarette smoking but we must understand that smoking from a water-pipe is significantly different because the smoker generally inhales far more smoke, smokes for longer, and there are different concentrations of toxins in water-pipe smoke than in cigarette smoke.

“Furthermore, there is a very dangerous and frankly wrong perception that water-pipe smoking is safe because the water somehow filters out the dangerous toxins in the smoke. I cannot emphasize enough that this is not true. The water only cools the smoke, it does not filter out the toxins.”

Dr. Cheema, director of the Institute for Population Health at WCM-Q, said: “Water-pipe smoking is a very social act and in the Middle East it is more socially acceptable for women than smoking cigarettes. This means that patterns of use are quite different from cigarette smoking so it is vital that we study water-pipe use separately to understand the risks more clearly.”

Data from a 2014 World Health Organization (WHO) study shows that tobacco kills up to half its users, amounting
to nearly six million people each year. More than 600,000 deaths per year are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. The Qatar World Health Organization Step Survey of 2012 found that 29.1 per cent of men in Qatar smoke, and 0.6 per cent of women.

Unpublished WCM-Q data indicates that among adolescents in Qatar aged 15-18 years, 13 per cent reported they had tried cigarettes and 22 per cent that they had tried water-pipe. Among college students in Qatar, 27 per cent said they were regular or social cigarette smokers, and 32 per cent regular or social water-pipe smokers.

A water-pipe smoking session can expose the user to up to 50 liters of smoke over a 45-minute use period, compared to around one liter of smoke that is consumed by someone smoking a cigarette over about five minutes. Water-pipe smokers are exposed to tar, addictive nicotine, carbon monoxide, and other harmful substances at similar levels and sometimes greater levels than cigarette smokers.

The meta-analysis of the 28 studies revealed data that points to a strong association between water-pipe smoking with cancers of the head and neck, esophagus and lung. The study, entitled ‘Cancer risk in water-pipe smokers: a meta-analysis’ has now been published in the International Journal of Public Health.

Other contributing authors to the study are Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, Dr. Ahmad Al Mulla of the Smoking Cessation Program at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), Dr. Albert Lowenfels of the Department of Surgery at New York Medical College, and Dr. Patrick Maisonneauve of the Division of Epidemiology and Biostatistics and the European Institute of Oncology.

Dr. Cheema added: “Our analysis of the existing studies points to a clear association between water-pipe smoking and several forms of cancer and people need to be aware of this so that they can make informed choices about whether they smoke or not. We also determined that the number of high-quality studies into the effects of water-pipe smoking is very low, so there is a great need for more investigation in this area, especially as shisha is so popular nowadays.”

Dr. Mamtani said: “Governments around the world have taken steps to reduce cigarette smoking in their populations through measures such as public health campaigns, tax policy, creating smoke-free areas and passing laws about what can be displayed on packaging. Until now, water-pipe smoking has managed to escape many of these measures.

“It is time for more studies about water-pipe smoking, more public awareness of the risks and we can also explore the opportunities for public policy on this issue to protect public health.”
Party for WCM-Q contracted staff

WCM-Q showed its appreciation for the hard work of its contracted staff by throwing them a party.

The celebration was organized by the Division of Facilities Management for all of the college’s 110 contracted staff members, which includes cleaners, office assistants, security staff and drivers. Along with a celebration cake there was also a gift of a Hala voucher for each of them to show the college’s appreciation.

John Doig, director of facilities management, said the work of the contracted staff was essential to the smooth operation of the college. Mr. Doig said: “Without the hard work and dedication of our security staff, cleaners, drivers, maintenance staff and all the others, WCM-Q would be unable to provide the world-class education, community initiatives and cutting-edge research that it does. They are vital to the running of the college and this event was our way of saying ‘thank you’ and to show our gratitude.”

Mr Doig said that the contracted staff are already provided with meals while they are working at the college and that the weekend celebration was an extra thank you to them.

He said: “We hold an event each year before Ramadan. It allows us to thank them formally and also get to know them better socially.”

Zumreen Muzamil, manager–building operations, welcomed the gathering and the event ended with performances by the contracted staff members.
John Doig (right) said WCM-Q’s contracted staff were vital to the running of the college.

Contracted staff members include office assistants, cleaners, security staff and drivers.

The celebration is an annual event.
Teenagers experience life as med students

A total of 68 students from 24 different nationalities explored their ambitions of becoming doctors as WCM-Q held its annual summer enrichment programs.

Students in years 10, 11 and 12 from schools across Qatar, as well as their peers at schools in the UAE, Oman, Kuwait, Germany and the UK, spent two weeks at WCM-Q, participating in either the Qatar Medical Explorer Program (QMEP) or the Pre-College Enrichment Program (PCEP). The QMEP is aimed at students entering 10th and 11th grade, while the PCEP is for those entering 11th and 12th grade but both give prospective students a taste of life as a medical student.

Syed Hasnain, student recruitment programs manager at WCM-Q, said the programs were designed to allow students to explore the college and the field of medicine so they could make informed decisions about their future.

He said: “Attending the summer enrichment programs at WCM-Q is a great way for local, regional and international students to see the college first-hand, so they can get a feel of what life as a student at WCM-Q would be like.”

Ahmed Al-Tamimi, who attends Omar Bin Khattab Independent School for Boys in Qatar, said the QMEP had clarified his career route.

Ahmed said: “I have always dreamed of being a doctor, but felt that my path was not clear. Now, after this program I am dedicated to become a doctor and overcome all obstacles.”
The programs allowed students to explore the prospect of a career in medicine through a challenging series of lectures, interactive clinical skills workshops, presentations and basic science lab sessions. The students also had the chance to discuss key issues in modern medicine with WCM-Q faculty.

The aim of both programs is to give students an accurate impression of life as a medical student at the college.

Lisa Joan Schiefer attends the English International School in Dusseldorf and was on the PCEP.

“Personally, I saw the program as a lifetime experience,” she said, “enabling me to receive an extensive and extraordinary insight in the medical profession, the study of medicine and the exceptional study conditions here at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar.

“The two-week program provided a fascinating and unique opportunity to learn from top medics and lecturers as well as students and graduates of the faculty. The program broadened my horizon and strengthened my wish to pursue a medical career at WCM-Q.”

Both the QMEP and the PCEP ended with a completion ceremony to which families were also invited.

Dr. Mohamud Verjee, associate professor of family medicine at WCM-Q, gave the keynote speech, urging the students to strive for success.

He said: “Seize the moment, work hard, and gain credit by merit. Surge forward with the focus on meritocracy. Mediocrity in medicine is unacceptable. Push yourself to the edge of capability, don’t hold back, but also be humble in your success. As you rise in status in society, be even more humble and never take anything as your right. You must strive for it, and it will often be a struggle, but you will overcome adversity if you are genuinely fuelled with your inner desire, with your heart and mind in synchrony.”

Finally, Shihab Al-Maawali, of Al-Sahwa School in Oman, said: “Cornell’s Summer Program has been a unique experience for me. I had the privilege to discover myself as a person, and I also gained valuable knowledge of medicine.”
A team of local and international experts in nutrition shared recent trends and the latest research into the impact of diet on health.

Organized by WCM-Q’s Division of Global and Public Health, the 50-hour intensive Certificate in Clinical Nutrition Course gave 51 healthcare professionals, educators, researchers and dieticians in attendance enhanced knowledge of key issues relating to nutrition and health.

Through a series of presentations, discussions and workshops, participants learned about the impact on health of popular nutritional and herbal supplements, elimination and anti-inflammation diets, Mediterranean-style dietary habits, veganism and vegetarianism, and the role of nutrition in the causation and management of chronic conditions such as obesity, cancer and diabetes.

Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, senior associate dean for population health and capacity building and course director, said: “When conceptualizing the course our attention was drawn to two noteworthy observations. One, even today, very few healthcare professional schools around the world provide adequate instruction in nutrition and lifestyle medicine to their students. For example, a 2014 study in *The American Journal of Medicine* cited a survey of medical schools that found an average of fewer than 20 hours over four years devoted to nutrition education.

“Two, there is overwhelming evidence that unhealthy food choices are linked to many chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Therefore, ignoring nutrition in our evaluation and management of our patients or clients is simply not an option.”

The WCM-Q course gives detailed instructions on how to plan healthy nutrition regimens for all types of individuals, including children, pregnant and lactating women, and the

The course gave detailed advice about creating healthy, tailored diets for a range of individuals with different needs.
elderly. All attendees who completed the course, which was held on four consecutive Saturdays, were awarded the Certificate in Clinical Nutrition.

Dr. Sohaila Cheema, director, Institute for Population Health and course director, said: "We all know that good nutrition is crucial to good health, but there is a vast amount of conflicting information available, which can be confusing for healthcare consumers. Our aim with the Certificate in Clinical Nutrition is to offer clear, consistent and accurate nutritional advice that can be applied to a wide range of people and situations, backed up by strong scientific evidence."

Dr. Mamtani gave presentations on the role of micronutrients, how to define what constitutes a healthy diet, how to tailor nutrition to specific health conditions, and the key characteristics of popular diets such as the Mediterranean and low carbohydrate diets. He also discussed specific clinical cases in which nutrition, along with appropriate clinical care, played a predominant role in the treatment of individuals. Dr. Cheema provided participants with information regarding practical tips on making healthy choices while shopping and eating for optimal health.

Dr. Albert Lowenfels, professor of community and preventive medicine at New York Medical College Valhalla, New York, presented on nutrition and cancer, and Dr. Benjamin Kligler, vice chair and research director of the Department of Integrative Medicine at the Continuum Center for Health and Healing in New York, spoke about the benefits and risks of various herbal and nutritional supplements.

Other presenters included WCM-Q's Dr. Rayaz Malik, professor of medicine; Dr. Shahrad Taheri, professor of medicine and director of the Clinical Research Core; Dr. Mohamud Verjee, associate professor of family medicine; Dr. Moncef Ladjimi, professor of biochemistry; Dr. Badreldeen Ahmed, professor of clinical obstetrics and gynecology at WCM-Q and director of the Feto Maternal Center; and Dr. Amal Khidir, assistant professor of pediatrics.

The other presenters were Dr. David Reilly, consultant physician at the NHS Centre of Integrative Care in Glasgow, Scotland, and Dr. Mohammed Ilyas Khan, lactation consultant and maternal and child health specialist at Hamad Medical Corporation's Al Khor Hospital.

In total, the course consisted of 32 hours of direct, on-site contact at WCM-Q and a further 18 hours of self-study using online course materials.

Course participant Dr. Rasmeh Ali Salameh Al Huneiti, research training and education specialist at the Health Care Quality Management And Patient Safety Department at the Ministry of Public Health, said: "I was pleased to attend the Certificate in Clinical Nutrition Course, because for me it went the extra mile beyond traditional training. It was a fantastic experience of knowledge-sharing through interaction with colleagues, meeting with scholars, experts and scientists."
The future of Qatar research

Four Qatari scientists have received certificates marking their completion of the sixth Biomedical Research Training Program for Nationals.

The annual program is held by WCM-Q and aims to help create the scientists of the future by giving talented Qatari graduates the opportunity to spend six months working in WCM-Q’s state-of-the-art laboratories learning key scientific research and administrative skills.

This year four graduates - Naira Al-Thani, Khaloud Al-Turki, Moza Al Kuwari and Njoud Al-Naama - who have backgrounds in biology, sociology and biomedical science, completed the program. Interns who complete the training learn a variety of skills that will help in their long-term research careers, including practical bench work, project design and research administration, among many other key competencies. Now in its sixth installment, the program has trained a total of 28 interns and is closely aligned with Qatar Foundation's Qatar Research Leadership Program.

Khaloud Al-Turki has a degree in sociology and business from Qatar University (QU). She said QU had encouraged her to join the Biomedical Research Training Program and that she had spent her time working in research administration.

Khaloud said: “I have been working on a project with the grants team to look at funding opportunities as well as working with the finance department to track accounts and balances.

“I would like to get involved with the research industry in the future as it’s an area that’s growing across the country and I’ve been really happy to work at WCM-Q.”

Njoud Al-Naama has a degree in biology from Cornell University and is a graduate associate in research at Sidra Medical and Research Center. She wanted to gain more research experience at WCM-Q. Njoud has been working in the laboratory of Dr. Alice Abdul Aleem, assistant research professor of neuroscience, and assistant research professor of neurology, investigating a potential genetic cause of the disease microcephaly. Njoud now hopes to eventually join a PhD program.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate professor of research at WCM-Q, said the four interns had great futures ahead of them.

Dr. Machaca said: “Khaloud, Njoud, Moza and Naira have all proven to be great assets to the college and the laboratories they have worked in and I offer them my sincerest congratulations for completing the program.

“More than that, though, they are contributing to Qatari research capacity; they are the next generation of home-grown scientists and research administrators who will make a very real contribution to not only the creation of a knowledge-based economy, but to the creation of knowledge itself.

“I wish them the very best of luck for the future.”
Health advice for students

WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First initiative supported a national campaign to provide information and advice to 300,000 children and their families as they prepared for the first day back at school.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Interior, the Sahtak Awalan team visited malls in Doha and distributed educational information and health tips to help returning students and their families adopt healthy lifestyle habits as the new academic year begins.

They also gave away Your Health First lunchboxes and water bottles along with innovative ideas to inspire and guide students and their parents to prepare healthy, nutritious lunches to eat at school and at home.

The nationwide campaign was called “Bil Ilm Nabnee Qatar” which means “With Knowledge, we build Qatar” and aimed to prepare students for the school year after the long summer holidays.

Similarly, WCM-Q’s Your Health First campaign aims to provide the knowledge, motivation and tools people in Qatar need to make healthy lifestyle choices, such as eating a balanced diet and taking regular exercise.

The ministry’s two-week campaign staged a variety of activities at two malls in Doha – Dar Al Salam Mall in Abu Hamour and Gulf Mall in Al Gharafa – and Sahtak Awalan was at both to hand out booklets, leaflets and healthy recipes for students and their parents, explaining the best foods to eat to maintain good health and ideas for making exercise fun.

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q said: “WCM-Q via Sahtak Awalan - Your Health First is delighted to contribute to this extremely important campaign by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.”

Mohanad Hesham, aged 12, a year eight student at Newton British Academy, said: “I like playing football and swimming so I need to eat good food to make me strong and healthy. I like milk and it gives you protein for your muscles and is good for your bones. I also like to have a salad and fruits, which can give you the vitamins you need.”

Dr. Nasser Alhayki has two children, aged six and four. He said: “There is so much advertising for fast food that children become very attracted to it. However, it is not too difficult to make sure your children eat healthy food as long as you educate them so that they understand why it’s so important for them.

“It’s good news that people are spreading the message about healthy eating to children in Qatar.”
Summer scholarships for high schoolers

Qatari high school students who won summer scholarships to study in New York in WCM-Q’s Healing Hands essay competition returned to the college to speak about their experiences.

Back in May, four high school students were judged to have written the best essays out of a large number of submissions and were awarded the fully-funded, two-week Doctors of the Future Scholarships to study at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City and Cornell University at Ithaca, upstate New York.

This year’s winners were Aljohara Salem Al-Marri, from Al-Eman Independent School for Girls, Jassim Ahmed Al-Mansoori, who studies at the English Modern School, and Imaneh Qaedi, from Al-Eman Independent School for Girls. The fourth winner, Fatima Mohammed Al-Naimi, of International School of London-Qatar, was unfortunately unable to take up the opportunity.

Having completed their summer scholarships, which ran from 16-31 July, Jassim, Aljohara and Imaneh returned to WCM-Q to give reports about their experiences.

The Doctors of the Future Scholarship was launched in 2008 and is organized by WCM-Q’s Student Recruitment and Outreach office, part of the Division of Pre-medical Education, with the aim of giving promising Qatari high school students the chance to explore the possibilities of a career in medicine.

This year’s program was the first to feature a week in Ithaca; previously, students spent the full two weeks at Weill Cornell Medicine-New York. Dr. Krystyna Golkowska,
WCM-Q’s associate professor of English, designed the new Ithaca program to give the students an idea of what it is like to study for an undergraduate degree and to acquaint them with Cornell as an institution. During their stay at Ithaca, the students attended lectures on a wide range of subjects and enjoyed experiential learning sessions such as visits to Cornell’s veterinary hospital and to real, working laboratories.

The students then travelled to Weill Cornell Medicine-New York where they spent a week in the labs of Randi Silver, associate dean of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences and professor of physiology and biophysics, and Stefan Worgall, distinguished professor of pediatric pulmonology and chief of the Division Of Pediatric Pulmonology, Allergy And Immunology. At the end of the week, the students presented their results to the lab teams. While in New York the students also toured NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, one the best academic medical centers in the United States.

Imanéh said the scholarship had been “truly inspirational.”

“It was a really great experience,” she said. “The most interesting thing for me was going on rounds in the clinic, getting to talk with patients and having the doctors explain the different cases to us. They showed us CT scans and explained the differences between healthy and abnormal physiology, so we got a real insight into what it’s like to be a practicing doctor.

“I have always wanted to study medicine and become a doctor - the scholarship experience has helped show me the way. I’m so glad I had this chance. “

Jassim said: “I enjoyed the experience so much, especially the lectures, which were really interesting. Since I got back I have been inspired to read and learn as much as I can about a wide range of subjects, from DNA and how it replicates through to theories about addiction. The whole experience was very intellectually stimulating.”

Each of the students was presented with a certificate of participation at a ceremony attended by Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, Dr. Marco Ameduri, associate dean for pre-medical education, Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, Noha Saleh, director for student recruitment and outreach, and Dr. Krystyna Golkowska, associate director of English.

Dr. Golkowska said: “We were extremely impressed by the aptitude and enthusiasm of the students. They worked extremely hard, were open to every new experience, and always had smiles on their faces. I am confident that if they applied and gained acceptance to WCM-Q, they would make excellent students.”

She added: “We were also very pleased that the students were enriched by the newly created visit to Ithaca and we have plans to continue this next year.”

Dr. Sheikh said: “We are extremely happy that our Qatari scholarship students responded so positively to the experiences they had in the US. They were excellent ambassadors for their high schools, for WCM-Q and for Qatar. We hope that they will continue their journeys as scholars of science and we welcome them to apply to study here with us at WCM-Q so that they can become physician-scientists able to serve their community.”

The topic of this year’s essay competition was ‘Technology in Medicine: Promise and Peril’. Aside from the winners, six students received honorable mentions. These were: Mohammed Khalid AlKuwari (Qatar Academy), Aisha Yousef AlJaber (Amna Bint Wahab Independent School for Girls), Bashayer Hmmaid Al Mansour (Al-Resala Independent School for Girls), Saad Salah Bhazad (Al Jazeera Academy), AlHanoof Hamad AlJalahman (Qatar Academy), and Sheikha Mohammed Almannai (Al-Resala Independent School for Girls).
Students and faculty heard about the efforts of a student at the college’s sister campus in Tanzania to tackle the country’s growing problem with non-communicable diseases like diabetes, obesity and hypertension.

Mugisha Imani, a fourth-year nursing student at the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences, an affiliate of Weill Bugando Medical Center in Mwanza, Tanzania, is the founder and CEO of Reach and Support All (RASA), a registered charity that seeks to improve public health in the country through social engagement, health literacy programs and free basic health checks.

Mugisha gave a presentation about RASA during a ten-day visit to WCM-Q with his fellow Weill Bugando medical students Amos Brighton, Fredrick Luoga, May J. Kikula and Langas Majuka. The students were accompanied by Weill Bugando faculty member Dr. Neema Kayange. The visit was supported by WCM-Q Student Affairs as part of a bilateral exchange of medical students between the institutions.

Mugisha explained that he was inspired to start the charity by his personal health challenges and his experiences with the patients he met while completing his clinical rotations in the Care and Treatment Clinic of Bugando Medical Center.

He said: “I had a very unhealthy lifestyle for many years and I suffered with obesity and hypertension. Fortunately, through diet, exercise and receiving good advice I was able to lose weight and get my hypertension under control. Then, when I was doing my clinical rotations in the hospital I was shocked at how many patients I met with similar stories to mine and I realized that non-communicable diseases are increasing at an alarming rate in Tanzania.

“I decided I wanted to do something to try to reverse these trends and improve the health of the people of Tanzania.”

NCDs have become more prevalent in Tanzania in recent years and are now estimated to account for 31 percent of all deaths in the country, according to the Word Health Organization. NCDs are defined as diseases that are not passed from person to person and are generally of long duration and slow progression. Cardiovascular diseases account for most NCD deaths, followed by cancers, respiratory diseases, and diabetes. Underlying most NCDs are unhealthy lifestyle habits like poor diet, lack of exercise and smoking.
Mugisha told the audience that in Tanzania NCDs affect both middle class professionals, who tend to eat a lot of Western-style fast food, and poorer people, who struggle to eat healthily because of irregular incomes.

“People who don’t have a lot of money find it hard to eat a healthy diet because often they just have to eat what is available when they have money,” said Mugisha. This tends to be cheap, local dishes available from street vendors, such as chips mayai – potato chips refried with minced eggs – which is very high in saturated fats and salt. So all parts of society are seeing increased rates of NCDs.

“There is a need to review the situation in Tanzania because these health problems are very serious and also negatively impact our development."

Chips mayai is often served with a local dish called mishkaki – strips of beef mounted on bicycle spokes or sticks and then roasted on an open fire. “Mishkaki also has a lot of fat and salt and the meat is often improperly cooked so it is not a very healthy dish,” said Mugisha.

Supported by his mentor Dr. Rob Peck, who has been based at Weill Bugando Medical Center since 2007, Mugisha established RASA in October 2015 along with several fellow students. The charity visits businesses and runs public clinics where volunteers provide free health screenings that check blood pressure, blood sugar level, weight, BMI and respiratory and heart health.

To date RASA has provided free screenings to some 5,290 people. The charity also collects health data and aims to create a national data bank to help decision-makers in Tanzania tackle the rise in NCDs.

Dr. Peck said: “When we think of sub-Saharan Africa, we usually think of infectious diseases. In reality, though, non-communicable diseases will soon overtake infectious diseases as the leading cause of death in his region. Hypertension is particularly common. Africa has the highest age-adjusted prevalence of hypertension but the lowest rates of hypertension awareness and treatment. Because of this, many young adults are dying from stroke and heart failure leading to economic devastation to their entire families. This is why community education and screening programs like RASA are so critical. As global citizens, we must work together to support this important work.”

RASA is dependent on donations to fund its operations and is not able to provide long-term healthcare to patients who are identified as suffering with an NCD. RASA was started with a grant from the WCM-NY Center for Global Health. However, the charity does try to fund the first hospital treatment for newly diagnosed NCD sufferers who lack the resources to pay themselves.

Mugisha added: “We hope to expand to provide screenings and health advice nationally across the whole of Tanzania so we are very keen to attract new sponsorship and donations.”

WCM-Q fourth-year medical student Zahra Rahman was in attendance at the presentation. She said: “I am really impressed by how much Mugisha and his colleagues at RASA have been able to achieve – it’s very inspiring.

“NCDs are a huge challenge for our generation and it is clear that screening, in combination with education to encourage healthy lifestyle habits, are the key.”
Your Health First campaign wins Qatar Sustainability Award

Sahtak Awalan - Your Health First, WCM-Q’s flagship public health campaign, has won the Qatar Sustainability Award in the University Initiative category.

The awards, run by Qatar Green Building Council (QGBC), recognize organizations that have made outstanding contributions to sustainable initiatives in Qatar in the past year. Your Health First has now gone one stage further and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Green Life initiative of QGBC to raise awareness of the impact that the built environment has on public health, and to promote sustainable health and environmental practices. Your Health First, which was launched in 2012 to encourage and empower people in Qatar to adopt healthy lifestyles, is founded on principles of sustainability and respect for the environment. The innovative campaign runs a series of initiatives that directly engage the community of Qatar in activities that promote both sustainability and healthy behaviors, with a special focus on young people.

These initiatives include Project: Greenhouse, which has gifted greenhouses and seeds to 82 elementary schools across Qatar and is teaching thousands of children to grow and enjoy eating fresh, organic produce, and to appreciate where food comes from. The Yalla Natural initiative uses a traveling roadshow, free cooking demonstrations and free exercise sessions to promote the health benefits of eating organic, natural produce and exercising in simple, natural ways that do not require lots of equipment, such as walking, running, aerobics and yoga. In collaboration with AMLAK Services, a Qatar Foundation partner, Your Health First brought healthy menus to Qatar Foundation school canteens with the Your Healthy Canteen initiative, guided by the belief that the health of the nation’s youth is a key element of sustainability.

The University Initiative award was presented to Nesreen A-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q, by Engineer Ahmed Al Abdullah, board member at QGBC. The Sustainability Awards Ceremony formed part of QGBC’s Sustainability Week campaign.

Mrs. Al-Rifai said: “We feel very honored and grateful to receive this wonderful award, and to enjoy the support of Qatar Green Building Council. We believe that sustainability and good health are two sides of the same coin because we must respect both our own health and the health of the environment if we are to thrive. We are very happy that Your Health First is able to teach the children of Qatar that if we nurture our environment it will nurture us by providing clean air and fresh, healthy food to eat.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “We are very proud to receive this award from Qatar Green Building Council, which does truly amazing work to ensure the environment in Qatar promotes the health of all. Your Health First and Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar are deeply committed to protecting and promoting the health of the community, and we believe respect for our environment forms a key part of this work.”

The five-year Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Engineer Meshal Al Shamari, QGBC director, and Mrs Al-Rifai.

Commenting on this collaboration, Engineer Al Shamari, said: “We are delighted to be partnering with Sahtak Awalan as it is fully in line with the objectives of our newly launched Green Life initiative. The Green Life is world’s first sustainability loyalty programme, which is designed to help people consider sustainability as a lifestyle and to show them that a few little changes can make a huge impact.

“Together with Sahtak Awalan, we will have numerous activities across the country in the near future to spread awareness and help residents achieve healthier lifestyles and environments.”
WCM-Q welcomes new faculty members

Continuing the college’s ongoing mission to provide excellence in medical education, four new professors were recruited to the WCM-Q faculty at the beginning of the academic year 2016-17.

The new additions welcomed to WCM-Q are:

- Dr. Aicha Hind Rifai, assistant professor of clinical psychiatry
- Dr. Ameed Raoof, professor of anatomy in radiology
- Dr. Mange Manyama, assistant professor of anatomy in radiology
- Dr. Grigory Ostrovskiy, assistant professor of emergency medicine in medicine
- Dr. Ming-Jung Ho, director of the Office of Educational Development and assistant dean for continuing professional development.

The new faculty members were chosen for their technical and clinical expertise, their flair for teaching and their interest in innovation, which accord with WCM-Q’s tripartite mission to provide excellence in education, research and patient care. These qualities are also deemed essential for the delivery of WCM-Q’s new curriculum, a key theme of which is a readiness to embrace innovation and progress, both in terms of technology and teaching methodologies.

Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, senior associate dean for medical education and continuing professional development, said: “We are very pleased to welcome these extremely talented and highly qualified professors to the faculty.

“Already we are seeing them excel at delivering our highly integrated new curriculum, and we feel their positive, progressive outlook matches with that of WCM-Q as an institution. The positive impact this has on the outlook of our students cannot be underestimated.”

Dr. Aicha Hind Rifai, assistant professor of clinical psychiatry.

Dr. Aicha Hind Rifai joins WCM-Q from the Department of Behavioral Health at the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit, Michigan, where she was an attending psychiatrist. Dr. Rifai’s arrival at WCM-Q marks a return to Qatar for her, as she spent a year as a temporary attending psychiatrist in the Department of Psychiatry at Hamad Medical Corporation from 2011 to 2012. Dr. Rifai is originally from Aleppo, Syria and obtained her MD from Aleppo University Medical School. She completed an internship in Psychiatry at Centre Hospitalier Sainte-Anne in Paris, France, and a residency in Psychiatry at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Newark, where she also completed a fellowship in Community Psychiatry and residency training in Internal Medicine.

An extremely well-traveled medical professional, Dr. Rifai was also assistant professor of psychiatry and medicine at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC) at the University of Pittsburgh from 1988 to 1994, a foreign exchange physician at the Evangelisches Krankenhaus in Darmstadt, Germany from 1998 to 2000, and an attending psychiatrist at Penn State Health St. Joseph Medical Center in Reading, Pennsylvania from 2001 to 2011.

Dr. Rifai said: “I was attracted to WCM-Q because I have always been interested in different cultural experiences and I was intrigued to see how psychiatry can be practiced and taught in the Middle East, where I am originally from. That was a big motivating factor for me and I feel it has been a very positive move.

“Teaching has always been part of my clinical teamwork but now I have the opportunity to dedicate more of my
time to teaching medical students, which I am enjoying even more than I thought I would. I find that the format of teaching small groups with a lot of emphasis on problem-based learning to be highly stimulating for both my students and myself. I am very pleased to discover that the students are not just interested in the biomedical aspects of mental health but also are keen to understand psychiatry in the context of culture, society and different therapies. An emphasis on a positive model of psychiatric education will be a strong asset in the fight against the stigma of mental illness worldwide.”

Dr. Grigory Ostrovskiy, assistant professor of emergency medicine in medicine, is welcomed back to WCM-Q as the first ever graduate of the college to join the faculty. Dr. Ostrovskiy graduated in 2011 and subsequently completed the emergency medicine residency program at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital. In his new role he will teach students the theory and practice of Point of Care Ultrasound and provide mentorship and support to students who hope to join emergency medicine residency programs after graduation. Originally from St. Petersburg, Russia, Dr. Ostrovskiy is excited to be back in Qatar and teaching at WCM-Q. For more details about Dr. Ostrovskiy’s appointment, see the report on page 11.

Dr. Mange Manyama, assistant professor of anatomy in radiology, joins WCM-Q from the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences (CUHAS) in Mwanza, Tanzania, where he was associate professor in the Department of Human Anatomy and Cell Biology from 2011 to 2015. Dr. Manyama has also been a visiting faculty member on the anatomy and visualization program at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York on three separate occasions.

Dr. Manyama obtained his medical degree from Muhimbili University College of Health Science at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. He also holds a Master of Science degree in Human Anatomy from Makerere University, Uganda and a PhD in Medical Sciences from the University of Calgary, Canada.

Dr. Manyama, who has published many peer-reviewed papers on subjects relating to anatomy and a variety of health issues in Tanzania, is now gaining great satisfaction from delivering the new curriculum at WCM-Q.

He said: “I am extremely happy to be here. The student culture here is very engaged and respectful - they are eager to learn and that makes our work extremely rewarding. The new curriculum is extremely interesting and enjoyable for us because of the increased integration with other courses. The fact that the students are able to see the real structures of the body and to correlate that with some of the diseases they have studied is very exciting for them. For me as a faculty member it is extremely rewarding to see what a positive impact it is having on the students to gain this knowledge in such a profound way.”

Dr. Ameed Raoof, professor of anatomy in radiology, joins WCM-Q from Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine in Michigan, where he was associate professor of anatomy.
Dr. Raoof, who is originally from Iraq, obtained his MD degree from the College of Medicine at the University of Baghdad, where he also completed a master’s degree in anatomy. He then obtained a PhD in anatomy and a diploma in medical education from the University of Dundee, Scotland. Dr. Raoof then spent 13 years at the College of Medicine of King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, first as assistant professor of anatomy and then associate professor of anatomy. In 1998 he joined the University of Michigan Medical School (UMMS), Ann Arbor as director of the Plastination Laboratory and assistant professor of anatomy and medical education, later rising to become director of the Division of Anatomical Sciences. During his career at UMMS Dr. Raoof received several national and university teaching awards, most notably The Kaiser Permanente Award for excellence in preclinical teaching, regarded as the university’s most prestigious award.

As a pioneer of the technique of plastination – the preservation of tissue using transparent silicone rubber – Dr. Raoof’s skillset make him a valuable addition to the WCM-Q faculty.

He said: “My two great interests are anatomy, of course, but also exploring new teaching methods in medical education to make learning experiences more effective. That is why I am very excited to be here and to be a part of the implementation of the new curriculum. Sound understanding of anatomy underpins and provides context for almost everything that medical students need to learn, so I am very encouraged that anatomy is being integrated with the basic sciences and clinical experiences at an early stage in the curriculum.”

Dr. Ming-Jung Ho joins WCM-Q as director of the Office of Educational Development and assistant dean for continuing professional development.

Dr. Ho earned a BA in Biological Anthropology from Harvard University, an MD from the University of Pennsylvania, and an MPhil in Ethnology and Museum Ethnography from University of Oxford, where she also received a DPhil in Social Anthropology. She has taught at National Taiwan University, National Yang Ming University, and Chang Gung University and has won several teaching awards.

Dr. Ho’s teaching and academic interest lies in the application of anthropology to medical education and she has published articles relating to these themes in many leading international journals. In her role at WCM-Q Dr. Ho will apply her expertise in cultural competence and professionalism to help students, faculty and members of the wider healthcare community realize their full potential as health professionals.

She said: “WCM-Q’s location at a crossroads between East and West, both physically and conceptually, make it a fascinating and extremely rewarding place to work. I am thrilled to be part of this incredible project that draws upon so many different cultures and expertise from all over the world to provide excellence in education, research and patient care.”
Happenings

Huda Alalami, Aya Tabbalat, Yazid Saidi, and Menatalia Mekhaimar encourage people to go for a run at ClubFest.

The event is one of the highlights of the student calendar.
ClubFest offers undergraduates the chance to participate in a wide variety of student organizations.

Lan Sawan says goodbye to Ellen Sayed at the latter’s leaving party.
Haya Al-Taweel, senior chemistry lecturer Sheila Qureshi, Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, and Dana Al Sayegh at the reunion of Foundation Program alumni.

Sheila Qureshi, senior lecturer in chemistry, with alumni of WCM-Q’s Foundation Program.
Hussain Hussain takes the role of Amedeo Avogadro and discovers the mole (6.02 x 10^23), which is a basic measuring unit in chemistry.

Hasan Alroobi acts the part of a wizard in the Mole Day sketch.

Aljazi Al-Khalifa hands out sweets to WCM-Q’s teaching assistants during Mole Day celebrations.
Dr Mohamud Verjee presented at the TEDx at the DPS-MIS School in Wahkra.

Leo Streletz talks to the large gathering of colleagues who came to celebrate his retirement and move back to Delaware, USA.
Your Health First's GET FIT is the only calorie-counting and activity-tracking app that comes in Arabic and English. It encourages you to monitor your diet and fitness to help you achieve better health and stay active.

Now available on the App Store and Google Play.

The app for healthy living

Your Health First's GET FIT is the only calorie-counting and activity-tracking app that comes in Arabic and English. It encourages you to monitor your diet and fitness to help you achieve better health and stay active.

Now available on the App Store and Google Play.

Connect with us /SahtakAwalan

www.SahtakAwalan.com
Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar is so much more than a medical school; it is a world-renowned institution and network of influential partners that combines groundbreaking research, top-tier education, and best-in-class care to put patients at the center of everything it does.