RESEARCH SHEDS LIGHT ON BRAIN DISORDER
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Accredited by the ACCME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sound and vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Research sheds light on brain disorder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Hearing the heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>The genetics of disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Diet, exercise and PCOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Class of 2017 graduate as physicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Arthritis and Arabs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>A trip through history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Children learn to live healthily with YHF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Improving diets, improving lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74</td>
<td>Excellence in teaching</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The magazine of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar
Published by the Office of Communications

**DEAN**
Javaid Sheikh, MD

**CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**
Nesreen M. Al-Rifai

**EDITOR**
Richard Harris

**SENIOR WRITER**
John Hayward

**PHOTOGRAPHER**
John Samples

[Website Links]
MATCH DAY FOR FUTURE DOCTORS

Class of 2017 discover where they will be spending the next stage of their medical careers.

Afnan AlBahri will be taking up a pediatric residency at Virginia Commonwealth University Health System.
Students of WCM-Q gathered at the college to celebrate securing places in residency programs at some of the most prestigious healthcare institutions in the world.

WCM-Q students ‘matched’ at leading institutions including NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center, Virginia Commonwealth University Health System, Yale New Haven Hospital, Lincoln Medical Center in New York, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) where they will continue their training after they graduate in May.

The annual Match Day event is the moment students discover whether they have been accepted onto a residency program in a medical specialty of their choice. The process is highly competitive – this year 54,110 US and international medical school students vied for just 28,849 first-year positions. The match results for students applying to residency programs at HMC were announced shortly after the US results.

There was standing room only inside the lecture hall at WCM-Q as the students of the Class of 2017 joined their friends and families to reveal the results of their applications shortly after they were announced by the National Resident Matching Program (NMRP) in Washington D.C.

Class of 2017 student Diala Steitieh matched at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center where she will join the neurology residency program.

Diala said: “I am so happy to have matched – it really is a dream come true. There have been some tough times along the way because the program is so challenging, so I am very grateful to my family, my friends and the faculty and staff for all their support. None of us would have been able to experience this amazing moment without the support of all of these people.”

Students who graduate from WCM-Q’s four-year Medical Program receive the same MD degree as graduates of Weill Cornell Medicine-New York, so they are well-prepared for applying to US residency programs. Many WCM-Q graduates return to Qatar after they have completed their residency training in the US to work locally and serve the community as the next generation of doctors.

Class of 2017 student Ali Khairat will join the emergency medicine residency program at Lincoln Medical Center in New York City. He said: “I am absolutely over the moon and so proud of my fellow Class of 2017 students. I am extremely happy because it’s very difficult to get accepted to emergency medicine residency programs and Lincoln was my first choice. We are all so fortunate that we were able to receive a world-class education while remaining in the region with our families – we are so grateful for that.”

Throughout the evening students expressed their gratitude to Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, chairperson of Qatar Foundation, for her role in bringing world-class educational institutions to Qatar.

Echoing those sentiments, Dr. Javайд Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “Through the vision and the support of the Qatari leadership, Qatar Foundation and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the human potential of these truly impressive young people has been realized. We are all extremely proud of them, not only for their achievements, but also because they take seriously their responsibilities as citizens and as physicians to make positive contributions to their communities. I know that they will serve as wonderful ambassadors for WCM-Q, Qatar Foundation and Qatar.”
WCM-Q becomes amongst the world’s first non-US institutions to gain ACCME accreditation.

ACCREDITED BY THE ACCME

Dr. Javaid Sheikh and Dr. Thurayya Arayssi (front), with members of the CPD team.
“We are very pleased and proud to become one of the first institutions outside of the US to receive ACCME accreditation.”

WCM-Q has become amongst the first institutions in the world outside of the United States to receive accreditation to provide continuing medical education for physicians from American’s top accreditation body.

The Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME) provides accreditation to US institutions that are able to demonstrate exceptionally high standards in the continuing medical education (CME) programs they offer to improve physician performance and medical care for patients in their communities.

There are approximately 2,000 ACCME-accredited CME organizations across the US, where the body is recognized as the national model in its field, but until recently accreditation was not available to institutions outside the US. Now WCM-Q has become one of the first three institutions outside of the US to receive the same accreditation and to have the rights and responsibility to designate AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™ (American Medical Association Physician’s Recognition Award).

At a ceremony held to announce the accreditation success, WCM-Q dean Dr. Javaid Sheikh said: “This milestone is a recognition of the commitment of WCM-Q and its dedicated faculty and staff to a high quality health education in adherence with international best practices. It is also an international recognition of the quality and value of programs being offered by WCM-Q to help physicians and healthcare practitioners locally, regionally and internationally to continually improve their skills and knowledge so that they can provide the very best standards of healthcare to their patients.”

Dr. Sheikh paid tribute to the work of WCM-Q’s Division of Continuing Professional Development, which led the college’s accreditation application. The decision by the ACCME was determined by a review of a self-study report produced by the CPD team, evidence of performance-in-practice, and participation in an accreditation interview.

Dr. Sheikh added: “I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, senior associate dean for medical education and continuing professional development, and her dedicated team for the role they played in achieving this milestone.”

A culture of high quality CME is regarded as an essential part of any modern healthcare system because it provides rigorous standards of best practice for physicians which are continually updated to keep pace with developments in medical science.

WCM-Q’s Division of Continuing Professional Development organizes a variety of learning opportunities such as workshops, seminars and lectures for members of the healthcare community in Qatar, both within and beyond WCM-Q.

Dr. Arayssi said: “We are very pleased and proud to become one of the first institutions outside of the US to receive ACCME accreditation. I am very thankful to my team for their hard work and dedication, and to all members of our faculty and the wider healthcare community who have contributed to our continuing medical education events.”

Dr. Graham McMahon, president and CEO of the ACCME, said: “I am delighted to welcome Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar to our community of accredited providers. With this achievement, Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar has demonstrated its leadership as a learning organization and its commitment to providing independent, relevant, practice-based, effective education that serves the continuing professional development needs of healthcare professionals. We look forward to working together to make a difference and support healthcare improvement in Qatar and around the world.”
In 2016, WCM-Q introduced its comprehensively revised and modernized four-year Medical Program, bringing it into line with the curriculum taught at the home campus in New York and ensuring that the college produces 21st-century physicians able to thrive in today’s technologically advanced healthcare environment.

Emblematic of this approach is WCM-Q’s new Point of Care Ultrasound (POCUS) component, which introduces students to a technology that is placing advanced clinical imaging capabilities into the hands of physicians like never before.
Students on WCM-Q’s updated four-year medical curriculum are learning how advances in ultrasound technology have enhanced the ability of physicians to make quick, accurate diagnoses at the bedside.

Over the past 15 years or so ultrasound machines have steadily become more compact and mobile, progressing from large, unwieldy machines that had to be housed in a dedicated imaging suite to laptop-sized devices that can be positioned by the bedside so that they are available to physicians at the point of care.

This leap in technological sophistication has changed the way medicine is practiced, and how it must now be taught, explained Dr. Grigory Ostrovsky, assistant professor of emergency medicine, one of the key members of the team delivering the POCUS component.

“As ultrasound machines became smaller and more mobile, doctors soon realized what an incredibly powerful tool it can be for making diagnoses at the bedside,” said Dr. Ostrovsky. “This is particularly true of emergency medicine, where the ability to make a quick and accurate diagnosis at the bedside is so often critically important, but doctors working in many different specialties are now also finding that POCUS can be extremely useful for them.

“In fact, we are reaching the point at which the mobile ultrasound machine is becoming so ubiquitous that many are beginning to view it as our generation’s stethoscope. This is a tool that almost all physicians are going to need to be familiar with, so it is very important that we introduce students to POCUS at an early stage in their training.”

Current WCM-Q first-year students of the Class of 2020 who entered the college in September 2016 are the first to take the new POCUS component, which is part of the Patient Care and Physicianship unit in the Health, Illness, and Disease course. In common with the rest of the updated WCM-Q curriculum, the content of the POCUS component was originally developed at Weill Cornell Medicine-New York and then adapted for WCM-Q. In collaboration with many WCM-Q colleagues, Dr. Ostrovsky has taken a lead role in the adaptation of the POCUS component for WCM-Q, and he delivers the instruction to students along with Dr. Aftab Mohammad Azad of Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and several other HMC emergency physicians.

Ultrasound uses very high frequency sound waves of between 1 and 14 megahertz that are directed from a probe into a patient’s body and reflected back at varying speeds by different tissues. The tiny disparities in the speed of the returning sound waves are analyzed by a
computer to create an image of structures inside the body. Unlike other imaging techniques such as X-rays, CT scans and MRI, ultrasound poses no adverse health risks to the patient or the user, making it ideally suited for use at the point of care by physicians who are not clinical imaging specialists.

Emergency physicians were the earliest and most enthusiastic adopters of the smaller devices, and for good reason—by allowing doctors to see inside a patient’s body almost instantaneously, point of care ultrasound can help them reach a firm diagnosis far more quickly in cases where a few lost moments could be the difference between life and death.

For example, using POCUS an emergency physician can quickly confirm a suspected abdominal aortic aneurysm or “triple A”—the bulging and potential rupturing of the large blood vessel leading from the heart to the rest of the body. As such, most emergency rooms are now equipped with ultrasound machines.

“POCUS has been a real game-changer for emergency medicine,” said Dr. Ostrovskiy. “Previously a doctor who wanted to use ultrasound would have to order a test and send a patient to another part of the hospital, then wait for the report to come back. Now we can use the probe at the bedside and look for ourselves to see if there are any clear signs of what might be wrong with the patient. This immediacy gives us a capacity for making diagnoses that simply wasn’t there before.”

Students studying the POCUS component are trained to use the ultrasound equipment by working under supervision with standardized patients—actors playing the part of patients—in WCM-Q’s Clinical Skills Center.

Dr. Ostrovskiy said that the rise of point of care ultrasound should not, however, be seen as replication or replacement of traditional ultrasound services provided by highly skilled technologists and radiologists working in specialist imaging suites.

“Point of care ultrasound will never be able to achieve the level of precision or complexity of interpretation that a highly trained radiologist and technologist can, but that is not the aim,” he said. “Instead, POCUS is about utilizing a very powerful tool to extend the scope of the physical examinations that doctors carry out every day. These are two very distinct uses of the technology that should not be confused.”

Using point of care ultrasound for the first time can have a dramatic effect on students, said Dr. Ostrovskiy. “The first time they see a live heart actually beating in someone’s chest, having only read about it or seen one in the anatomy lab before, it can be a very impactful experience,” he said. “It definitely reinforces their learning experiences and we think it also boosts the natural fascination for medicine that they already have, which is great for student morale.”

In the future, ultrasound machines will become even more compact, mobile and easy to use at the point of care. The machines that are currently most popular are about the size of a fairly large laptop and are weighty enough to necessitate being placed on a trolley, but the next generation of devices coming onto the market are the size of a tablet or smartphone. Dr. Ostrovskiy and others predict that it will not be long before it is common for physicians to use devices that link to a conventional smartphone or tablet, meaning ultrasound technology will be truly hand-held.

“That’s why POCUS is being talked about as the new stethoscope,” added Dr. Ostrovskiy. “As the devices become ever smaller and lighter the comparison seems more and more appropriate. This is a technology we want our students to understand, value and know how to use.”

POCUS offers physicians the chance to make immediate diagnoses - particularly in emergency situations.
A chapter penned by the writing faculty of WCM-Q has appeared in a book that has won the 2017 Outstanding Book Award from the US-based National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).


The chapter describes challenges that the WCM-Q Writing Program faced in translating American models of writing pedagogy into the context of Arabian Gulf education in Education City, Qatar as well as within an overseas medical school, explained Dr. Alan Weber, associate professor of English at WCM-Q.

“Our chapter analyzed how our program was able to respond to cohorts of students trained in very different educational paradigms, such as the kuttab system,” Dr. Weber said. “In this form of traditional Gulf school, the instruction is often teacher- rather than student-centered and memorization of knowledge takes precedence.”

Dr. Weber added: “In the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) model of writing supported on the campus of Cornell University at Ithaca, writing instructors emphasize the process of writing as a means of building knowledge and clarifying thought. Thus writing becomes a process of intellectual discovery, and assists in developing creative and innovative problem-solving abilities and fostering critical and analytical thinking skills which are central to a knowledge economy. Many of the insights detailed in the chapter relate to the implementation of the Writing Across the Curriculum model here in Qatar at WCM-Q.”

The award was announced at The Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC). The CCCC, which has more than 5,000 members and subscribers, forms part of the NCTE and supports and promotes the teaching and study of composition, rhetoric, and communication skills at college level, both in undergraduate and graduate programs. The National Council of Teachers of English, established in 1911 with 35,000 individual and institutional members worldwide, is the largest, oldest and arguably the most prestigious professional organization for English teachers in world.

Dr. Martins, the editor of the book, received the award on behalf of the authors at a ceremony held in Portland, Oregon. Dr. Martins is an associate professor of writing and writing director at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in Rochester, New York. He also oversees the writing programs at RIT Dubai University, and is an authority in the field of transnational writing instruction and how American writing pedagogies can be adapted to new overseas contexts to best serve students.

Professor Krystyna Golkowska, WCM-Q associate professor of English, said: “The writing faculty at WCM-Q view their classes as opportunities to help WCM-Q students appreciate just how valuable liberal arts education is as a means for personal and professional development. Thus we emphasize not only exposure to humanistic thought and building the culture of reading and writing but also self-reflection and intercultural competence. We are very gratified that our exploration of these themes in the chapter was able to contribute to Dr. Martins’ book winning the 2017 NCTE Outstanding Book Award.”
A total of 43 people donated blood to Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) at a blood drive hosted at WCM-Q and coordinated by the college’s students.

A group of four pre-med 2 students teamed up with the Family Medicine Interest Group (FMIG), a student organization, to coordinate the event at WCM-Q. HMC set up a donation station in the college’s South Hall and rarely had a quiet moment as students, faculty and staff from all over Education City stopped by to give blood.

Med 3 students Rula Al-Baghdadi, FMIG president, and Nourhan Kika, FMIG vice president, were approached by pre-med 2 students Wajiha Yousuf, Hania Ibrahim, Gowrii Ganesan and Tehniyat Baig with the plan for the blood drive.

Rula said: “Since we set up the Family Medicine Interest Group in 2015 we have wanted to organize a blood drive but it wasn’t until the pre-med students approached us with some useful contacts that we were able to do so. We are extremely pleased and grateful that so many people from all over Education City and WCM-Q gave up their time to come and donate blood.”

Nourhan said: “There is always a need for more blood donations and there have been appeals on the radio for donors recently. We thought that there would be lots of people at EC who want to donate blood but perhaps don’t have time to go to the hospital, so we guessed that if we helped set up a station in a convenient location there would be a really good response, which there was.

"We are very thankful to HMC for bringing their station here and to staff at WCM-Q who helped make it possible."
RESEARCH SHEDS LIGHT ON BRAIN DISORDER
A study by researchers at WCM-Q has revealed the genetic cause of a neurological disorder and the implications it has for marriage.

The research examined the genetics behind cerebellar ataxia, a congenital malformation of the brain whereby the total volume of the cerebellum – a part of the brain that regulates muscle activity at the back of the skull - is diminished. This can result in the sufferer having problems walking, poor coordination and a tendency to be a ‘late developer’ as a child. Cerebellar ataxia can also be associated with poor muscle tone, lack of coordination and learning disabilities.

However, because cerebellar ataxia is often an inherited disease, it could have major implications for the consanguineous marriages that are common in Qatar. When the mutated gene that causes the disorder is expressed in a recessive manner, both parents have to have the same recessive gene for some of their children to be affected. Because genes are inherited, it is much more likely that people within an extended family carry the same genes. Therefore, a consanguineous marriage within a family who carry the mutated recessive gene is much more likely to lead to cerebellar ataxia in the children of that marriage. The implications of such a marriage should, therefore, be carefully thought about and genetic screening considered.

Collaborating investigators from WCM-Q, Weill Cornell Medicine in New York and Hamad Medical Corporation have now discovered an unusual recessive mutation that leads to cerebellar ataxia. Their results were published in the *Annals of Neurology*, a highly influential journal in the field. The study, entitled ‘Mutation in non-coding RNA, RNU12 causes early-onset cerebellar ataxia’, was carried out by a team of doctors and scientists including lead researcher Dr. Alice Abdel Aleem, WCM-Q’s assistant research professor of neuroscience, and assistant research professor of neurology, along with Dr. Elizabeth Ross, the Nathan E. Cumming professor of neurology and neuroscience, and chair of the Neuroscience Graduate Program at WCM in New York; Dr. Mahmoud Fawzy Elsaid, senior consultant pediatric neurologist in the Department of Pediatrics at Hamad General Hospital; and Dr. Tawfeg Ben-Omran, senior consultant and head of clinical and metabolic genetics at Hamad General Hospital.

Dr. Abdel Aleem explained that this particular family study was launched after a young woman visited her clinician with symptoms of cerebellar ataxia. Her brother was also found to have the disorder and the researchers asked if they, and their extended family, would take part in research to examine the genetic cause.

Blood samples were taken from two branches of the family and DNA, RNA and protein was extracted. The data was then analysed by the study research team and the WCM-Q Bioinformatics Core. After looking at the entire genome, a rare variation in the DNA sequence of non-protein coding ribonucleic acid (RNA) called RNU12 was found. This RNU12 variant was associated with affected family members, following the inheritance pattern expected of a recessive gene. Laboratory investigations carried out by Dr. Nader Chalhoub, a post-doctoral associate at WCM-Q, confirmed that the variant impacts the expression and function of RNU12. This is an exciting finding, since most disease-associated mutations identified to date involve the small fraction of the genome that encodes proteins. The non-coding regions that regulate how the genetic blueprint is read by our cells pose a new frontier of genetic investigation that has been challenging to explore.

Results show the recessive gene responsible and suggest people should be screened before marrying.
Dr. Abdel Aleem said: “The study will open a new window for screening for cerebellar ataxia. It also shows geneticists how important it is to conduct research on all parts of the genome - both protein-coding and non-coding – when looking for causes of disease.

“At the national level, because many families here are consanguineous, family members may have the same genetic defect. Therefore, the implications of marriage in such cases should be considered carefully. Genetic counselors can be very helpful in this regard.

“It is also important to raise community awareness about the pivotal role of families who engage in approved genetic studies. This mutation could not have been identified without the participation of both healthy and affected family members.”

However, although the research identified the mutation, it did not identify which of the gene(s) that are regulated by RNU12, and so are affected by RNU12 mutation, are directly responsible for the cerebellar ataxia. That is the subject of further study by Dr. Ross at Weill Cornell's parent campus in New York. In collaboration with Dr. Aleem's laboratory, Dr. Ross’ group will produce and study experimental animal models that are engineered to carry the same mutation as was found in the study family.

“This will allow us to follow in the lab the gene expression patterns that affect the development and aging of the brain – in particular the cerebellum – when two copies of the RNU12 mutation are present,” said Dr. Ross. "We can use this information to probe the pathway downstream of RNU12 that is so important for normal brain development. In this way, we hope to find effective targets for treatment that may slow or even prevent cerebellar ataxia in individuals with RNU12, and perhaps other gene, mutations."

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean of research at WCM-Q, praised the work and its focus on conditions of concern to Qatar. Dr. Machaca said: "It is extremely gratifying to see research that is funded nationally by Qatar National Research Fund reap such important discoveries about conditions that are affecting the health and wellbeing of Qatari families and that these discoveries may usher in personalized medicine approaches for local people. When it comes to issues related to family planning in particular, scientific advances can be greatly beneficial in helping to ease the emotional stress on the family and the high medical expenses on the system, especially for chronic conditions such as cerebellar ataxia."

The research was made possible by Qatar National Research Fund's NPRP grant 4-099-3-039, the Qatar Foundation Biomedical Research Program, and the Teebi Project.
WCM-Q welcomed a Malaysian student as part of its membership of the global educational exchange in medicine and the health professions (GEMx) program.

Faghira Afrina binti Mat Tarmizi is in the final year of the medical education program at Penang Medical College, and is the third student to have visited WCM-Q as part of the GEMx initiative. The 22-year-old spent four weeks at WCM-Q, working at the primary health care centers, and at Aspetar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital in which she has a special interest.

Afrina said: “I lived in Doha previously and I have attended a summer enrichment program at WCM-Q. I was interested in taking sports medicine or orthopedic electives or something that combined the two, and I saw that WCM-Q offered sports medicine. I contacted my college who told me to contact GEMx and everything went from there.

“At the primary health care center, the routine was pretty much the same as Malaysia, however, the majority of the system is computerized and because of that you have more time with the patients. Aspetar has been the highlight of the visit, though. In fact, it was one of the most wonderful experiences. Because it’s specialized, the doctors have more time with patients and perhaps because of this they also had more time for me so I found the teaching was very personal and that’s something I don’t get in Malaysia as there are so many other students.”

GEMx is a program of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG), which allows partner universities to publish details of the electives that they offer. Students from across the world can then apply for the electives knowing that the quality of teaching and student support are of acceptable standards. There are currently 42 institutions that are members of the program, in 27 countries across the globe. The aim is to allow medical students to experience different healthcare models of their choice and gain new perspectives on medicine, medical care and its delivery.

He said: “Afrina has been an enthusiastic and highly motivated student and I am delighted that she has had such a positive experience at our partner institutions. This really is what GEMx strives for – offering students across the globe opportunities that they may otherwise have difficulty accessing at their home campuses.”

Dr. Sohaila Cheema, director of WCM-Q’s Institute for Population Health, said: “GEMx is a wonderful way for medical students to broaden their horizons, providing them not only with a new perspective on healthcare delivery, but also on social and cultural issues.

“Having spent part of her formative years in Doha, Afrina has spoken of the possibility that she may return as a doctor to practice sports medicine here and I hope that the GEMx program has contributed to making that a reality.”

For more information about the GEMx program visit http://www.gemxelectives.org .
ANNUAL RESEARCH RETREAT FOCUSES ON SUCCESS

Delegates told of college’s work and how it is achieving its goal of creating a regional center of excellence.

WCM-Q’s seventh Annual Research Retreat looked at the transformation of biomedical research in Qatar and the accomplishments of WCM-Q’s scientists over the past year.

This annual event is a highlight of the college’s calendar and is becoming a tradition that allows researchers to showcase their work and share their findings with their peers from across Qatar and the wider world.

Delegates attended from a broad range of biomedical institutions to hear of the latest developments in biomedical research, and also to examine the work of students, research specialists and post-doctoral scientists.

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q, recounted the program’s major successes.

Dr. Machaca said that the mission of the Biomedical Research Program, which was only launched eight years ago, was to create a center of research excellence in Qatar.

He said: “Our goal was to become a beacon of knowledge creation, contributing to Qatar’s drive towards a knowledge-based economy, while also focusing on the health needs prevalent in Qatar. To be successful, we have had to create the infrastructure and develop the research workforce, thereby adding research capacity to the wider industry.

“I am very proud to say that we have had considerable success. Over a six-year period, our scientists had their work published in 587 publications, and this culminated in an annual citation rate of 3,411 citations in 2016 alone, highlighting the impact and visibility of the research conducted at WCMQ.”

Dr. Machaca, who later delivered a lecture about his work into calcium teleporting, said that the college now has 32 active laboratories, centered around eight research
cores, and employs 181 researchers, the vast majority of whom are recruited locally.

In addition, Research Division has trained 130 research specialists – 28 of whom are Qatari nationals – specifically targeting those who have a strong desire to work in research and wish to make it their career. The Nationals Training Program is also allowing WCM-Q to retain some of these extremely talented individuals as permanent employees, a major goal at the program’s inception. Furthermore, trainees from the various research training programs at WCM-Q are seeding other national programs including those at the Qatar Biomedical Research Institute, Hamad Medical Corporation and SIDRA, thus contributing to a sustainable, highly trained research workforce nationally.

In addition, Dr. Machaca said that each year WCM-Q has more than 90 per cent of the medical student body undertaking research of some form, generally through the Summer Research Program. This flagship initiative allows them to conduct research at laboratories throughout the world and also allows them to act as ambassadors for the college.

The issue of research in the framework of public policy was addressed by the dean of WCM-Q, Dr. Javaid Sheikh, who praised Qatar for the progress it has made in creating a fertile research environment in less than a decade.

Dr. Sheikh said: “Qatar has, in a very short time, established a robust research infrastructure and is conducting significant basic research. This will support the commercialization pipeline in the long term and will contribute towards Qatar transitioning to a knowledge-based economy. Multiple research institutions in Qatar are well on their way toward establishing collaborative programs in the fields of basic, translational, clinical and population research. Findings from these efforts will seed the commercialization efforts led by Qatar Science and Technology Park.

“There is a drive for entrepreneurship and we now need to promote stronger partnerships between academia and industry, towards developing an integrated model of innovation.”

Those sharing their work at the Annual Research Retreat included keynote speaker Dr. David Thomas, Canada research chair in molecular genetics at McGill University in Montreal, who delivered the lecture “Curing Protein Trafficking Diseases”, the most infamous example of which is cystic fibrosis.

Additionally, presentations were given by WCM-Q researchers Dr Nayef Mazloum, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology; Dr. Joel Malek, assistant professor of genetic medicine; Dr. Stephen Atkin, assistant professor of medicine, and Dr. Maher Saqqur, senior consultant at Hamad Medical Corporation’s Neuroscience Institute.

The Research Retreat also featured a total of 92 poster presentations by research specialists, students, postdoctoral fellows and research associates from WCM-Q, highlighting a broad spectrum of scientific areas. The event closed with the announcement of the winners of the poster presentation in three categories.

First place in the student category was awarded jointly to Tarek Taha, for his poster The Musculoskeletal Phenotype of the Aga2+/ Mutant Mouse Model of Osteogenesis Imperfecta, and Tina Bharani, whose research poster was titled Defining Glioma Invasiveness through Mutations in Neurodevelopmental Protein IgSF3. Second was Amal Abdellatif with Molecular Characterization of Circulating Tumor Cells Reveals Inter-Patient Heterogeneity, and third was Mostafa Naguib for his research, Silencing Anti-Plasticity Genes Enhances the Reprogramming of Murine Fibroblasts into Induced Cardiomyocytes.

In the research specialists’ category, Gaurav Thareja came first with a poster detailing a genetic survey of diversity in Phoenix dactylifera trees from Qatar. Second was Areej Hezam with Exploring the Role Of UHRF1 In Adipocyte Hyperplasia, and third was Nancy Kiwan for her poster, Sleeping Patterns in Patients with Chronic Mental Disorder Maintained on Antipsychotics: Comparison to Healthy Controls and Patients not Taking Medications.

In the postdocs/research associates category, Vimal Ramachandran was awarded first prize for his poster about the potential therapeutic properties of microRNA33 in reducing cholesterol. Second was Samson Samuel for the research Anti-angiogenic Effects of Metformin in 2-Deoxyglucose Treated Microvascular Endothelial Cells: Role of Thrombospondin-1. Third was Raphael Courjaret for his poster entitled Calcium Teleporting to Specific Intracellular Targets.
Stamina and determination pay off as mother-of-two completes triathlon.
Many months of dedicated training paid off for a WCM-Q staff member as she swam, biked and ran her way through one of the most grueling athletic tests on the planet.

Annemarie Kilshaw, an administrative officer in the Dean’s Office, completed a 3.8km ocean swim, a 180km bike ride and a full marathon in 12hrs 58 minutes at the Ironman Triathlon in Busselton, Western Australia.

Annemarie, who is 51 and has two teenaged children, fit training in around her full-time job, and busy family, which meant she was up at 4am most days to hit the pool or the road.

She said: “I was just so, so happy to get over the line after all that effort and hard work, but I really enjoyed the whole experience – I just loved it. I am a little bit amazed because only a few years ago I found it quite tough to finish an aquathlon, which is a 500m swim followed by a 5km run. But when I started pushing myself I realized that I could do a lot more than I thought.

“I think that we often don’t give ourselves credit for how strong we can be if we really try. I honestly believe that everyone has it in them to do something like an Ironman if they believe in themselves.”

Annemarie completed the swim in 1hr 21m, the bike ride in 6hrs 51m and the marathon (42.2km/26.2miles) in 4hrs 35m. Impressively, her time in the run was the fourth fastest in her age category and also the first time she has run a marathon. Annemarie also overcame a mini-crisis during the bike ride when she suffered a puncture around 2kms in. She said: “Luckily I managed not to panic, I changed the inner tube and I soon got back into my rhythm. There was a lot of camaraderie with the other competitors, who were really friendly, and so too the volunteers and spectators, that helped me to stay positive out there.”

With guidance from an online coach based in the US, Annemarie trained six days a week, completing two training sessions on five of those days and a single session on one day. Morning sessions meant rising before the sun and driving to Dukhan to complete a long bike ride, sea swimming at the Pearl with members of Doha Triathlon Club or swimming up to 4.5kms in a 25 meter pool or setting off on runs around her compound and across Doha. She also did one weights session each week.

“It sounds a lot,” she laughs, “but once you establish a routine exercising is just another daily habit. After all, we all get up and get ourselves to work or to school every day, which takes a fair bit of self-discipline. Once you’re into the routine it just sort of feels natural after a while.”

Other important elements of Annemarie’s training were making sure she got plenty of sleep and eating a healthy diet with lots of fresh fruit, vegetables, lean meat and fish. She steers clear of processed foods and anything containing preservatives, even making her own breakfast cereal consisting of oats, nuts, seeds and fresh berries.

“I think it’s really important to eat fresh produce and to avoid things with preservatives, sugar and artificial additives,” she said. “I avoid things in packets and I try to eat fresh with a good mix of colorful fruit and veg, which are also naturally really tasty. We really enjoy our food as a family – eating healthily doesn’t have to be boring and I plan my meals for the week ahead to make things easy.”

Having completed the Ironman, Annemarie has reduced the intensity of her training schedule a little to allow her body to recover, but she has her next goal firmly in her sight.

“I loved the experience and I felt like I still had a bit left in the tank when I finished, so I definitely want to do another Ironman,” she said. “To break the 12-hour mark would be amazing.”

Annemarie’s next challenge will be to break the 12-hour mark.
First-year medical students at WCM-Q reaped the benefits of the new curriculum’s emphasis on early introduction to physicianship skills when they visited HMC Heart Hospital to perform cardiac examinations on real patients.

WCM-Q’s innovative new curriculum has been designed to give students opportunities to interact with real patients under careful supervision almost from the beginning of their training, in contrast with traditional programs, which leave this to the latter stages.

A key element of providing early clinical experiences is WCM-Q’s strong collaborative relationship with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), where WCM-Q students take many of their clinical rotations, in which they spend time

Fathima Zahir measures a patient’s heart rate.
learning with experienced and gifted HMC physicians in many different hospital departments.

This year’s cohort of first-year WCM-Q students are the first to experience the new curriculum, which was launched in September last year. The visit to HMC’s Heart Hospital now forms part of the Health, Illness and Disease course that WCM-Q students take in the second semester of the first year of the medical program. Working closely with HMC is crucial for providing WCM-Q students with world-class training to enable them to become the next generation of doctors serving the community of Qatar and beyond.

During the one-day visit, 38 students worked in pairs to meet with a patient, take their medical history and then perform a clinical cardiac examination. This entailed taking the patient’s pulse, using the stethoscope to listen to their breathing and heartbeat, and then taking a blood pressure measurement. They then wrote up their notes and presented the case to a senior HMC cardiologist.

Dr. Liam Fernyhough, assistant professor of medicine at WCM-Q, accompanied the students to the hospital to guide the learning experience and supervise the examinations. He said: “One of the key strengths of the new curriculum is that it maximizes the amount of time the students have to develop core clinical skills and helps to make the material they have been learning in the classroom relevant and memorable. This not only makes for extremely effective learning experiences but also gives the students a great boost in morale. We are very grateful to HMC and the patients who have so generously accommodated our students to make this learning experience possible.”

WCM-Q offers an integrated six-year medical program consisting of a two-year premedical curriculum and a four-year medical curriculum. Students who successfully complete the program are awarded a fully US-accredited MD degree.

Student Toqa Afifi said: “This was the first time we had the chance to put our stethoscopes to good use and it was really an exciting moment for us to be able to apply in real life what we have learned in the classroom. We are very grateful to the patients for allowing us to examine them.”

HMC’s associate director of medical education, Dr. Maggie Allen said: “HMC is delighted to offer WCM-Q students such important learning opportunities in their early clinical years. The Heart Hospital preceptor team, led by Dr. Salma S. Ibnouf, worked hard to ensure a rewarding clinical experience for the students. This will be followed by a further three such preceptorship visits within the medical wards of Hamad General Hospital.”
A groundbreaking study by WCM-Q researchers has revealed many previously unknown links between genetic variations and a series of debilitating conditions, including Alzheimer’s disease, heart disease, autoimmune disorders and cancer.

A team of researchers led by WCM-Q’s Dr. Karsten Suhre, professor of physiology and biophysics, analyzed the genetic data of more than 1,300 individuals from Europe, Asia and the Middle East and identified over 450 genetic variants, many of which are involved in serious diseases.

However, the study went a step beyond conventional genome studies, which generally focus on simply attempting to identify genes which are associated with disease. In contrast, Dr. Suhre’s research aimed to understand in greater detail the many complex chemical processes involved in translating the information held within genes into the actual physical characteristics of diseases. Discovering the secrets of these intricate chemical processes – known as ‘pathways’ – is essential to provide a basis for the development of a new generation of drug therapies and more effective diagnostic tools for a host of complex diseases.

Dr. Suhre explained: “Since the human genome was first mapped in its entirety in 2003, researchers have been working to understand the function of every gene in our body so that one day we can use this knowledge to truly cure complex diseases, like diabetes and cancer.

“However, in order to translate this knowledge of the human genome into new drugs or treatment, it is not enough to simply know which genes are involved in
a disease – we know a lot of that already. Rather, we need to understand the roles that disease-associated genes play in the pathways that lead to disease. So the challenge for medical science is no longer simply to find out what genes are involved in which disease but to work out precisely how they are involved.

The groundbreaking study, entitled ‘Connecting genetic risk to disease endpoints through the human blood plasma proteome’, has been published in the prestigious UK-based journal Nature Communication.

Explaining the research further, Dr. Suhre said that the human genome essentially acts as a series of blueprints that tell the body how to produce the approximately 20,000 different proteins that are the building blocks of our body. In recognition of this, the research aimed to understand how variation in genes influences the proteins that are made from them and how this leads to disease. The WCM-Q research is different because in addition to analyzing the cohort’s genomes and health states the study also examined more than 1,100 proteins.

Indeed, the project conducted the world’s first GWAS (genome-wide association study) to analyze more than 1,100 proteins in 1,300 individuals – no previous study of this kind has analyzed such a large cohort nor so many different proteins.

To achieve such a large-scale study the researchers had to bring a protein measurement tool capable of handling very high volumes of data to Qatar for the very first time. The study marks the very first time the tool, provided by US-based company Somalogic, has ever been used outside of the US. This platform is now available for use by all researchers in Qatar. Moreover, the blood samples used by the researchers were sourced from a previous study that was conducted in collaboration with the dermatology department of Hamad Medical Corporation in Qatar. The study also performed all genetic analyses through the WCM-Q genomics core facility. Importantly, the paper combined analysis of the genome, known as genomics, with analysis of an organism’s proteins, known as proteomics. This combined approach, called ‘multiomics’, helps researchers understand the interactions between genes and the proteins that they encode.

Dr. Johannes Graumann, the WCM-Q researcher who implemented the Somalogic platform in Qatar, said: "We are proud to say that this study was conceived and led by researchers in Qatar, and at institutions funded by the Qatar Foundation. It places Qatar firmly on the map as a major player in population studies with deep molecular phenotypes."

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q, said: "This novel multiomics approach combined genomics and proteomics in blood samples using cutting-edge technologies to link various diseases to protein biomarkers in blood. This approach is not only powerful in better understanding disease development but also promises novel biomarker discovery especially for complex diseases. The ability to conduct such cutting-edge research under the auspices of Qatar Foundation is indeed extremely rewarding and aligns well with the goals set out in Qatar National Vision 2030."
Largest crowd ever for The Color Run, hosted by WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First campaign.

The Color Run attracted its largest crowd ever for its third staging in Doha at Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC).

In total, 7,200 Color Runners completed the ‘Happiest 5K on the planet’ and got coated from head-to-toe in a tropical array of colors each kilometer of the course until the finish line. One of the biggest and most colorful events that Doha has ever seen, this edition of The Color Run, which is brought to Qatar by WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First campaign, brought a new theme to Doha through its Tropicolor World Tour.

Thousands of participants, young and old, veterans and first-time Color Runners walked, jogged and skipped their way through the five-kilometer course as they got bathed in Tropicolor powder at each of the five Color Zones. The new theme; the Tropicolor World Tour, included palm trees, bright colors, and island-style music. Also featured were Rainbow Beach and the Finish Festival, a larger-than-life celebration at the interactive island, featuring, music, unique photo opportunities and massive color throws.

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer for WCM-Q, which runs the Your Health First campaign, said: "We
were thrilled to see so many people in Doha participating in the Qatar edition of The Color Run. This is testament to the success of our campaign, demonstrating once again Doha’s commitment to lead a healthier and happier lifestyle. This third edition of The Color Run has witnessed unprecedented fun and excitement and has marked an extraordinary celebration where the local community had one goal in common; getting healthy and active and appreciating doing so in a fun environment.”

Amina El Mamy, a participant, commented on her experience at The Color Run event saying: “It was just amazing, I have never seen or experienced anything like this before in Doha. It was great seeing people going at their own speed on the course; I saw people of all ages, children, teenagers, and parents pushing toddlers in strollers as well as the elderly participating at this event. At the end of the five kilometers there was a Color Extravaganza at the Finish Festival with a huge number of colors exploding into the air. It felt like a wave of color and happiness all thrown at me at once. The atmosphere was absolutely amazing and I can't wait for next year’s event to do it all over again.”

With 7,200 Color Runners, Doha has once again demonstrated Qatar’s vision to encourage residents to lead healthier and happier lives. Events such as The Color Run celebrate health, happiness and individuality and encourage participants of all ages and abilities to focus on their lifestyle and well-being.

Greg Sproule, managing director for IMG Middle East, the organizer behind the event, said: “This third edition of The Color Run presented by Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First in Qatar, has seen an action-packed day of fun and fitness, with the Doha community flocking to the event in thousands. We have witnessed serious amounts of fun all day with music, color throws and an exciting new experience with the new theme, the Tropicolor World Tour, which immersed participants in tropical-island sensations and vibes starting from the Warm up Zone through to the Color Zone, the Tropicolor Zone and the larger than life celebration, the Finish Festival.

“We would like to thank everyone for joining us today, and for their enthusiasm, great spirit and most importantly their commitment to maintaining a healthy and active lifestyle. We would also like to thank our partners, Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar with this third edition of The Color Run presented by Sahtak Awalan: Your Health First, and their ongoing support and commitment to encouraging residents of Qatar to continue to lead a happy and healthy lifestyle”.

A portion of the proceeds are being donated to Educate a Child by The Color Run with $1 of every entry donated to the charity.
SUCCESS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Almost 30 high school students have this year completed the Qatar Aspiring Doctors Program (QADP), providing them with an insight into what life would be like as a physician.

The year-long program is run by WCM-Q and is designed to show promising high school students a window into life as a student at the college, as well as helping them to evaluate their career options and support their academic success at high school.

A total of 35 students enrolled in the program and 28 have now completed it, receiving certificates at a special ceremony at WCM-Q. Of those 28, 27 are Qatari. The students come from a total of 16 schools, seven of which are independent and nine of which are international.

Noha Saleh, director of student recruitment at WCM-Q, explained how the program works.

She said: “The QADP aims to prepare students for college and the rigors of a medical degree, as well as helping them to improve their college applications. The college’s faculty concentrate on teaching the sciences, English and research skills so as to improve the students’ readiness for the study of medicine, and to some extent this mirrors their own schools’ curriculum, so improving their chances of exam success. The QADP also has the advantage of flexibility, allowing the participants to work remotely and independently when school or family commitments demands it.”

Teaching for the QADP is by a range of WCM-Q faculty and staff, but special mention was given at the ceremony to Dr. James Roach, associate professor of chemistry, Dr. Rachid Bendriss, associate professor of English as a second language and assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, Dr. Ghizlane Bendriss, lecturer in biology, and Reya Saliba, learning & student outreach librarian.

Razan Al-Mousawi, who currently attends Qatar International School, was one of those who completed the QADP.

The 18-year-old, who has applied to join WCM-Q’s six-year integrated Medical Program in September, said the program has been hugely beneficial and very enjoyable. Razan said: “I had previously been on WCM-Q’s Summer
Explorer Program and from that I was nominated to participate in last year's QADP.

"I wanted some insight into life at WCM-Q specifically as my parents don’t want me to travel outside Qatar. I've now decided that I do want to study medicine, and hopefully become a surgeon eventually.

"The course itself was really good. The topics were not taught in parallel with those at school but the curriculum was practically the same and the research skills that we were taught on the QADP really helped with preparing for the Qatar High School Medical Conference that is happening later this year."

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, WCM-Q's assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, praised all those students who had completed the program.

He added: "The Qatar Aspiring Doctor’s Program is an excellent opportunity for students with an interest in medicine as a career to receive support, both with their learning but also their college applications. It also eases students into studying at WCM-Q; if they are successful in their later application to WCM-Q, they already know what we expect academically and they have had the chance to meet faculty, staff and students.

"So far, the program has proved to be highly successful, and many of the students who take part in the QADP go on to apply and study at WCM-Q. Through the program we are helping to create a new generation of doctors who otherwise may not have applied to study medicine, and in doing so we are helping to build medical capacity within Qatar and the wider region."

New research offers hope for women suffering from polycystic ovary syndrome.
One of the principal causes of female fertility problems in Qatar could be solved simply through losing weight and taking more exercise when young, according to researchers at WCM-Q.

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is thought to affect around 22 percent of pre-menopausal women in Qatar and increases the levels of the male hormone testosterone in a woman’s body. This interferes with ovulation, and if a woman is not ovulating she cannot fall pregnant. The condition is also characterized by cysts in the ovaries, and increased hair growth, particularly on the face or chest.

But a study conducted by Dr. Stephen Atkin, professor of medicine at WCM-Q, demonstrates the link between lifestyle and PCOS and emphasizes the need to eat healthily and exercise regularly.

Dr. Atkin said: “I was given access to Qatar Biobank and so was able to view the biometric data of 750 anonymous Qatari women between the ages of 18 and 40.

“On the very basic diagnostic criteria of raised testosterone levels and irregular periods, we found that the rate of polycystic ovary syndrome was 12 percent but this is an underestimation, probably by about a half, as the third diagnostic symptom – ovarian cysts – could not be ascertained as the biobank does not include ultrasounds of the patients’ ovaries.

“In a Western society, around 10-14 percent of women have polycystic ovary syndrome whereas in Qatar it’s about 22 percent, so the question is whether Qatari women are more susceptible to the disease and the complications that come with it.”

What can be ascertained, however, is the strong correlation between diabetes and pre-diabetes, when the onset of type-2 diabetes is likely because of raised blood sugar levels.

Dr. Atkin said: “More than eight percent of the 750 women had pre-diabetes but 19 percent of the women with polycystic ovary syndrome had pre-diabetes.

“Essentially, if you have polycystic ovary syndrome you have more than double the chance of developing pre-diabetes. Polycystic ovary syndrome is also associated with diabetes in pregnancy. In fact, 66 percent of women with gestational diabetes have polycystic ovary syndrome and this is a problem for both mother and baby.”

Even if women with PCOS don’t develop diabetes, there are concerns the condition can make sufferers more susceptible to developing heart disease earlier and with more severe consequences. Added to this, PCOS is associated with an increased risk of endometrial cancer.

Dr. Atkin said: “It is an extremely serious condition that can have devastating consequences. It not only makes conception more difficult for couples wanting to start a family, but through its association with diabetes and heart disease, it can shorten life expectancy. Added to this, PCOS can also severely affect a woman’s self-esteem. The increase in the male hormone testosterone can lead to acne, facial hair and even, in severe cases, balding. This obviously is hugely detrimental to a person’s confidence.”

Although there is no cure for PCOS, the condition and its symptoms can be managed, and Dr. Atkin runs a clinic at Hamad Medical Corporation specifically for women with PCOS and will shortly open a second at Sidra Medical and Research Centre. However, prevention is far better than cure and lifestyle factors have a huge impact on PCOS – poor diet, a lack of exercise and being overweight make it much more likely that a woman will develop PCOS.

Dr. Atkin said: “There is a need to alert women about the problem and tell them what can be done in terms of prevention so they don’t develop the complications that occur when they go on to marry or get pregnant, or later on with respect to their overall health.

“It would be great to be able to go in to schools and give lifestyle advice. It’s one thing telling young women to eat sensibly and exercise for cosmetic reasons, but another if you are telling them it could affect their fertility in later life.

“Weill Cornell Medicine–Qatar wants to help the community and focus on diseases and conditions prevalent in the region. In the US, PCOS costs the economy around $4.3 billion per year and relatively speaking, I’m sure the cost is similar in Qatar, particularly with regard to fertility treatment. However, by educating women about the causes of PCOS and encouraging them to improve their lifestyles, we can have a hugely positive impact on families across Qatar.”

Dr. Atkin added that the work could not have been done without the collaboration of Qatar Biobank and BMRP1 funding from Qatar Foundation. He said collaborative efforts like this makes a real difference to the people of Qatar.
LAW AND MEDICINE

Event explores impact of new and amended laws on healthcare.

The impact of legislation on the delivery of healthcare in Qatar was examined and explained at a seminar held at WCM-Q.

More than 150 physicians, nurses and allied healthcare professionals attended the one-day event at WCM-Q to hear expert speakers discuss the implications of new and amended legislation relating to privacy and personal data protection, employee sponsorship and the delivery of mental healthcare services.

The seminar was the fifth of WCM-Q’s Law and Medicine series, which holds events three times a year to explore the intersection between the two professions and provide useful information to healthcare and legal professionals working in Qatar, the region and beyond.

Opening speaker Kelly Tymburski LLB, a partner at Denton’s law firm, spoke about Law No. 13 of 2016 Concerning Privacy and Protection of Personal Data, which was announced in November last year.

Ms. Tymburski said: “Among several other provisions, the new law requires data collectors to disclose the purposes for which data is being collected, the parties that will be involved in processing activities and the manner of processing. Additionally, data controllers must limit their collection and retention of personal data to that which is relevant and necessary to achieve the purposes for which it was collected.”

Speaker Kamaljit Dosanjh LLB, senior associate at Al Tamimi & Company, gave a talk about changes to Qatar’s sponsorship laws and the likely impact on the healthcare workforce. Law No. 21 of 2015 superseded the Kafala system with the intention of making it more straightforward for employees to switch jobs and leave the country.

Dr. Suhaila Ghuloum, senior consultant in the Department of Psychiatry at Hamad Medical Corporation, delivered a talk entitled ‘Qatar’s Mental Health Law and Impact on Healthcare Delivery’. The lecture discussed legislation relating to training of healthcare professionals involved in mental healthcare delivery, compulsory admission of patients and the role of families in mental healthcare treatment.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion and Q&A session moderated by Dr. Sunanda Holmes, associate university counsel and assistant professor of healthcare policy and research at WCM-Q. Dr. Holmes said: “Our goal for every session is to facilitate dialogue among the various professionals who together can improve healthcare delivery, support healthcare professionals and protect patients’ rights.”

Dr. Suhaila Ghuloum, of Hamad Medical Corporation, spoke about the impact of new and amended legislation.
Pre-medical and foundation students at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar have learned about the realities of a career in medicine after shadowing doctors at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC).

The annual HMC Observership program allows students of WCM-Q's foundation program and pre-medical curriculum the opportunity to spend a week in one of nine departments at HMC, including emergency medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, internal medicine and psychiatry. The students are able to accompany doctors on their patient rounds, participate in morning conferences, and watch surgeons in the operating theater.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, said the goal was to expose students not yet learning the medical curriculum to the healthcare system.

Dr. Bendriss said the program allows them to learn about the daily routine of physicians, become familiar with the various medical specialties open to them, and reflect on their experiences at HMC.

Dr. Bendriss said: “The HMC Observership program is a very valuable learning experience for the pre-medical and foundation students, as it allows them a greater insight into the day-to-day life of a physician and what their working life will be like when they graduate. It also allows the students to begin forming ideas about the direction they would like their career to take, and challenges preconceptions they may have about certain specialties. “In addition, they also learn about the importance of teamwork and the value of strong and clear
communication. It really is a very important program and I would like to thank the leadership of HMC and the doctors and nurses at Hamad Hospital who help facilitate the program and give so much of their time and experience to our future doctors."

This year, 56 WCM-Q students participated in the scheme during the college’s winter break. Pre-medical 1 student Sumaya Maraghi, was one of them. She chose to spend time in HMC’s Department of Pediatrics.

She said: “It was interesting. It changed my perception of pediatrics, which I thought was just dealing with children and fairly simple diseases. But there are a lot of facets to it and the children can’t always tell you what’s wrong or where it hurts, so it’s the doctor’s job to work it out and find the problem. I thought it was very challenging and an amazing field to work in.

“I was lucky enough to be part of a very helpful and cooperative team who really showed me what the specialty involves. They had such great communication with each other and really discussed the cases, they were amazing, I wanted to continue working with them.”

For Noor Al Nassr, who is on WCM-Q’s foundation program, it was her second experience of participating in the observership program. This time she chose to shadow physicians in the Surgical Department.

She said: “I have shadowed doctors that work in pediatrics but I wanted to see what happens behind the scenes. I’ve seen patients after an operation so it was good to see what happens in the operating theater and how the doctors communicate and help the patient.

“"I'm still interested in pediatrics, particularly pediatric cardiology because I love kids and it’s fun. It’s more informal than treating adults, you can play around with them and it has a lot to do with child psychology as well as you have to calm them down first.

“"It was great overall. It made me focus on the patient-doctor relationship and interaction. I also attended outpatient clinics and participated in the grand rounds where they discuss the cases.”

Nasser Al Kuwari, who also visited the surgical department, summed the experience up.

He said: “It was an exciting experience and interesting to see how the doctors communicate with different patients, particularly those who do not speak Arabic. The experience showed me what it feels like to be a doctor.”•
Medical professionals from across Qatar join a discussion on the growth of healthcare.

The sustainability, professional development and evolution of healthcare were discussed as WCM-Q held its Building Capacity in Healthcare Professions symposium.

The symposium was organized by the college’s Institute for Population Health with collaboration and input from The Divisions Of Pre-Medical Education And Admissions. Held over two days, the event featured workshops that allowed the in-depth study of the topic, along with lectures by world-renowned medical and healthcare experts. The aim was to show delegates that continuous learning and improvement are the basis for capacity building but that related issues like health policy, global education, health practitioners’ wellness, counseling and self-care inform the subject and are directly related to the overall improvement of public health and healthcare.

Subjects for the workshops were varied, and included Peter Martin, the interim chair of graphic design at Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, discussing the impact that design has on the development of healthcare, and WCM-Q's own Dr. Ravinder Mamtani and Dr. Sohaila Cheema leading a discussion about lifestyle medicines. Other workshops covered a systems
“It was heartening to see so many fellow healthcare professionals from different disciplines; nurses, paramedics, counselors, health executives, therapists and healthcare workers as well as physicians and researchers.”

approach to capacity building and lifelong learning by Dr. William Bozeman from the University of Central Florida, and social media research and practice in health by Drs. Luis Luque and Ingmar Weber from the Qatar Computing Research Institute. From WCM-Q, Dr. Alan Weber spoke about narrative medicine and Ms. Maha Elnashar and Ms. Huda Abdelrahim focused on cultural competence.

Dr. Mamtani, professor of healthcare policy and research and senior associate dean for population health, capacity building and student affairs, said the symposium had been a great success, attracting professionals from every sector of healthcare in Qatar.

Dr. Mamtani said: “We are interested in supporting programs and activities that can help Qatar move forward and that’s a commitment we have given to Qatar and its healthcare practitioners.

"I think that one of the most important lessons to have come out of the symposium was the ever greater need for inter-professional collaboration and lifelong learning. Healthcare sectors should strive for a greater understanding of their colleagues’ roles, and in doing so they will have a very positive impact on patient care. Similarly, the world today is moving very quickly; medical research is constantly producing new therapies, techniques and examples of best practice and it is vital for healthcare workers to stay abreast of developments for the benefit of their patients.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, spoke about developing innovation in the training of healthcare professionals, and the megatrends like climate change, non-communicable diseases, and urbanization, that are impacting healthcare - and the need for healthcare education to evolve to address those trends.

Dr. Sheikh also said that there needed to be a sea-change in the way that medicine is taught; there should be a greater focus on population health, competency-based training rather than time-based training, and an overhaul in the learning of information systems.

Dr. Arthur Hengerer board chair for the Federation of State Medical Boards in the US, spoke about the importance of physician wellness and burnout, and stressed the need for an open and transparent medical environment, where concerns could be raised without fear in order to protect patient safety.

Dr. Hengerer also said that physicians should be conscious of burnout and alleviate the stress of their work by improving communication channels with their colleagues, ensuring they have a clearly-defined work-
life balance and fostering strong relationships outside of work, among other strategies.

The subject of biomedical research was tackled by the world-renowned Dr. John Ioannidis, CF Rehnborg chair in disease prevention, and professor of medicine and of health research and policy at Stanford University in the US. Dr. Ioannidis postulated that biomedical research has endemic problems and that researchers need to be more rigorous in their search for answers. Dr. Ioannidis quoted figures that showed 96 percent of research claimed to have found “significant” percent results, a statistic he said suggested “extreme reporting bias”.

Dr. Ioannidis also said there were problems with researchers cherry picking the best hypotheses so as to achieve positive results, that there was little replication of studies to ensure veracity, and that data was usually not shared. There was also a question over whether some research was worthwhile.

Dr. Ioannidis ascribed a lack of funding, and strong competition for that funding for the problems within current biomedical research, but said researchers should first ask themselves questions before embarking on a study. These questions included whether the proposed study was long enough and large enough to elicit useful information, does the research reflect real life, and are the methods, data and analysis verifiable and unbiased.

The symposium was concluded with a question and answer session featuring all of the speakers.

Dr. Sohaila Cheema, director of the Institute for Population Health and co-chair for the symposium, said it had been a well-received and intellectually thought-provoking event. Dr. Cheema said: “It was heartening to see so many fellow healthcare professionals from different disciplines; nurses, paramedics, counselors, health executives, therapists and healthcare workers as well as physicians and researchers. This created an excellent environment for the dissemination of knowledge and experiences, and allowed different perspectives to be heard on how to build capacity in Qatar’s healthcare arena.”

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs and co-chair for the symposium said: “The symposium provided an open forum for a lively exchange of knowledge and ideas on developing human capacity in Qatar. Hosting prominent global speakers at the symposium exposes our local healthcare practitioners and students to a variety of current topics and trends that impact healthcare and inspires our students to strive for excellence.”
A WCM-Q alumnus from the Class of 2014 has had his research abstract named among the best by the American Society of Hematology.

The American Society of Hematology is the premier and largest hematology conference in the world, attended annually by around 20,000 attendees. For any specific research category, the committee reviews the abstract submissions, and selects the top six studies worldwide to be presented as an oral session.

Dr. Yazan Abou-Ismail, who is now in the third and final year of internal medicine residency training at Rochester General Hospital and will be specializing in hematology and oncology, submitted the abstract for his research on von Willebrand Disease, a hereditary bleeding disorder. Competing against almost 200 other abstracts on the disease, Dr. Abou-Ismail’s was chosen as one of the top six. He then presented it in front of an audience of 400 specialists and was presented with the abstract achievement award for the research.

Dr. Abou-Ismail said: “Having the opportunity to present our research at such a prestigious setting was a surreal experience. As an internal medicine resident, speaking to a hall filled with around 400 worldwide specialists and experts on bleeding disorders with decades of experience was certainly intimidating. However, it was phenomenally rewarding to witness their interest in our results and learn that they were impressed with our work. That is the point where I felt like I had made the first truly impactful step in my career as a future hematologist, just two days before learning that I had successfully matched into it.

“There is nothing more rewarding than learning that the countless hours of hard work and dedication have paid off by resulting in tangible data and receiving that magnitude of national recognition.

“I was overwhelmed with exhilaration when I first found out we were selected. I admit that I had to read the email several times to make sure I had not misunderstood. I am beyond grateful towards my residency program and my mentor for all their support.”

The idea behind Dr. Abou-Ismail’s research - ‘Outgrowing’
the Laboratory Diagnosis of Type 1 von Willebrand’s Disease: A Two-Decade Study - was proposed by his mentor, Dr. Peter Kouides, an award-winning and international expert on bleeding disorders.

Von Willebrand disease is the most common hereditary bleeding disorder and arises from a qualitative or quantitative deficiency in von Willebrand factor (vWF), a multimeric protein that is required for platelet adhesion and plays a vital role in blood coagulation. Because of this deficiency, affected patients have an increased tendency towards life-threatening bleeding, and often require hemostatic therapy before undergoing any procedures. However, Dr. Abou-Ismail said that the experts’ experience at the hemophilia center where he works shows that there is a tendency for some patients to ‘outgrow’ the disease and normalize their measured vWF defects as they age.

It was decided, therefore, to design a retrospective cohort study testing the theory that some patients do grow out of the disease as they get older.

A database of 266 patients with von Willebrand disease was formed, 126 of who were included in the study, and their disease history – spanning 20 years - collated. The results found that in about 20-30 percent of patients with von Willebrand disease the levels tend to completely normalize with age over an average period of 10 years.

Dr. Abou-Ismail said the study is the largest of its kind to date, and the first to be done in a US population. He hopes it will generate new hypotheses and help determine whether rescinding the diagnosis helps preclude the need for hemostatic therapy, which has its own risks for patients, such as thrombosis, hyponatremia, and transfusion reactions. The results also encourage a clinical practice change, as physicians should consider retesting the levels 5-10 years after the initial diagnosis of the disease is made.

The abstract was published in Blood Journal.
WCM-Q celebrates the highlight of the academic year as 45 students are presented with their MD degrees.
The country’s newest doctors have received their MD degrees from WCM-Q and will now go on to take up residencies at Hamad Medical Corporation and hospitals in the US.

The 45 graduates received their US-accredited MD degrees at a ceremony at Hamad Bin Khalifa University’s Student Center on May 3 in front of family and friends and WCM-Q faculty and staff. The 45 new doctors join the ranks of 256 other alumni of WCM-Q who are now treating patients and helping to cure disease and heal injuries at Hamad Medical Corporation and hospitals around the world.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, congratulated the new physicians on their achievement and commitment to their academic studies. He told them that the vision of Qatar Foundation of creating a virtuous circle, in which students are trained in Qatar and then return to practice medicine once their US residency training is complete, has now come to fruition.

Dr. Sheikh said: “A career in medicine is one of the most rewarding jobs that anyone can undertake. You now have the knowledge to heal people, to offer succor in their darkest hours and to relieve suffering. During your residencies your knowledge will grow and you will begin to specialize, becoming experts in your respective fields. At the same time, I hope your compassion and empathy grows with it. Never forget that your patient should be at the center of everything that you do and that the knowledge you now have is there for the benefit of your fellow Man.

“Together with your fellow alumni of WCM-Q, you are in a wonderful position; you are able to help Qatar achieve the aims of QNV 2030. Graduates of Weill Cornell Medicine are now working in the country’s hospitals, enriching the healthcare system and becoming thought leaders within the profession. Some have also joined WCM-Q as faculty members, having truly come ‘full circle’. "In time, I am sure I will see you all return to practice in Qatar and maybe you too will join the college’s faculty, passing on your experience to the doctors of the future."

Class valedictorian Dr. Ali Khairat told the Class of 2017 that they are capable of doing anything.

He said: “If these six years at Cornell have taught me anything, it is that succeeding here takes true passion. How else can we justify subjecting ourselves to hours and hours of mental torture, anxiety, and apprehension? It is passion.

“So go forth, tighten your boot straps, do what you love and don’t take no for an answer. If life slams a door in your
face: remember it’s a door, you can just open it again. And if it’s locked, rooms have windows, find one. And if you can’t find a window, break down a wall. Remember you’re carrying a toolbox. With this mentality, glory will find you, your task is not to seek it. It will merely come as an added benefit of doing what you love.*

The guest speaker at the graduation event was Dr. Amal Al-Malki, founding dean of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at Hamad Bin Khalifa University. Dr. Al-Malki said the new doctors would prove to be excellent ambassadors for WCM-Q, Qatar Foundation and the whole nation.

She said: “It is wonderful to be here to see the members of WCM-Q’s Class of 2017 realize their dreams of becoming doctors, which I know they have worked so hard to achieve. At HBKU, as a partner university of WCM-Q and a fellow member of Qatar Foundation, we share the same passion for educational excellence, innovation and service to our communities as the young men and women who are graduating today. We will remain united by these values and, therefore, I have no doubt that the Class of 2017 will serve as wonderful ambassadors for Qatar Foundation and Qatar itself, wherever their careers may take them.”

Also watching the Class of 2017 receive their MD degrees and take the Hippocratic Oath was Dr. Augustine Choi, dean of Weill Cornell Medicine in New York.

Dr. Choi told the graduates: “This medical school has achieved so much in the sixteen years since it was established. You are truly making a difference not just in the MENA region, but around the globe. You are bringing better healthcare to Qatar and neighboring countries. You are building a culture of biomedical research where one hadn’t existed before. The fruits of that program are just beginning to be felt - I think we’ll be astounded when we look back ten years from now. And most importantly, Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar is training the next generation of healthcare leaders - the people who will carry us through to the future and truly make a difference.”
Dr. Javaid Sheikh said he was sure the new doctors would return to work in Qatar, completing "the virtuous circle".

THE CLASS OF 2017

Saleha Abbasi
Joud Said Abou-Oudeh
Ali Al Jabri ∗
Afnan Albahri
Khalid Al Dasuqi ¶ ●
Omar Aljaiziri
Sahar Al-Kurbi
Ahmad Almeer
Nawaf Al-Taweel
Haya Al-Thani
Aseel AlZibdeh
Fathima Ameerudeen
Mohamed El-Said Amin
Ameneh Amini
Ridin Balakrishnan
Tarek Barbar ∗
Elizabeth Boctor
Anchalia Chandrakumaran ∗
Aya El Jerbi
Sarah Elsoukkary ∗
Tahsin Farid
Zahra Habibur Rahman
Pierre Halteh ●
Lina Irshaid ● ●
Sarah Kanbour
Ali Khairat
Ayesha Khalid
Tushar Khanna
Bassil Kherallah
Geraldine Kong Wai Jing
Haidar Kubba
Alaa Kubbar
Mostafa Naguib
Hamza Oglat ●
Christina Jee Ah Rhee
Josia Schögl ●
Muhammad Shakir ●
Mohammed Sheriff
Diaa Steitieh
Omar Subei
Shruthi Suresh ●
Khalid Taha ● ●
Rebal Turjoman ●
Samer Younes
Bushra Zakzok

● with academic distinction
● with honors in research
● with honors in service

Hundreds of 'selfies' were taken in the robing room.
NO EXCUSE FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE

Education City pledges to stop domestic violence at event that brings hundreds of students, staff and faculty together in solidarity.

Students from WCM-Q pledged to oppose domestic violence in all its forms at the latest Stand Up, Speak Out event at Education City.

WCM-Q students Karen John, Heta Ladumor, Ameena Shafiq and Pratyaksha Sinha at the Stand Up, Speak Out event.
Held on the Green Spine the event was a chance to raise awareness about domestic violence, show solidarity with those who are affected by it, and teach people how to react if they witness domestic violence. The organizing colleges were WCM-Q, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, Northwestern University in Qatar, and Georgetown University – School of Foreign Service in Qatar.

Donna Gala, student health and wellness coordinator at WCM-Q, said it was important that young people are aware of the problem and know how to take a stand against it.

She said: “Domestic violence can affect anyone, of any race, nationality or gender, and our students and those from other campuses on Education City came together to show that it will not be tolerated. No-one should be subject to violence, and certainly not in the sanctity of their home.”

Hundreds of students, faculty members and staff took part in the event, that included a pledge wall and information about what you should do if you are a bystander to violence or any other kind of harassment. WCM-Q students Afnan AlBahri, Gowrii Ganesan and Angela Dandan also launched the new college organization You Are Not Alone, which will offer peer-to-peer support for personal issues of all kinds.

In addition, the Qatar-based NGO Queens Without Scars was at the event and represented by its founder Yezenia Navarro, a Mexican expat and runner-up in the 2014 Mrs Universe contest. The NGO was formed after Mrs Navarro herself suffered abuse, and campaigns against domestic violence across the world.

Later in the evening, visitors watched a screening of the film The People’s Girls, a documentary about the growing problem of the sexual harassment of women in Egypt.
Research reveals the genetic basis of rheumatoid arthritis in the Middle East.

Researchers have completed a major five-year investigation of the genetic factors underlying susceptibility to rheumatoid arthritis in Arab populations in five different countries.

WCM-Q’s Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, associate professor of medicine and senior associate dean for medical education, led a team of researchers from five centers across the Arab World that collected samples from around 1,600 individuals with rheumatoid arthritis in Qatar, Jordan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and
Dr. Thurayya Arayssi led a team of researchers from across the Arab world. The team found that mutations in a gene called HLA-DRB1 are associated with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) risk in Arab populations just as is the case with Europeans and East Asians, suggesting broad similarities in the genetic structure of RA across ethnic groups. However, the study also identified two additional genes that are associated with rheumatoid arthritis in Arabs but are not in Europeans and East Asians.

Dr. Arayssi said: “This research, funded by the Qatar National Research Fund, is one of the largest studies ever conducted among Arabic populations with rheumatoid arthritis. The results of the study give us new and extremely valuable population-specific insights into the pathophysiology of rheumatoid arthritis, which is extremely encouraging. RA is a very unpleasant disease to live with so any discoveries we can make about it are very valuable and could help future researchers develop new, more effective drug therapies.”

Rheumatoid arthritis is a potentially debilitating autoimmune disease characterized by very painful inflammation of the joints, particularly in the hands and feet. RA can also affect larger joints, the skin, lungs, kidneys and the heart and blood vessels, among other parts of the body. The cause of RA is not fully understood and there is currently no cure so treatment is focused on managing the disease.

The study, entitled ‘A multi-national Arab genome-wide association study identifies new genetic associations for rheumatoid arthritis’, has been published in the prestigious medical journal Arthritis & Rheumatology. The study is part of a wider research project entitled ‘Genetic Studies of Rheumatoid Arthritis in some Arab States’ that was made possible by NPRP grant 4-344-3-105 from the Qatar National Research Fund, a member of Qatar Foundation.

Dr. Richa Saxena of the Broad Institute said: “Arab populations are diverse, and as in other populations, family history is an important risk factor for rheumatoid arthritis in Arabs. Before this study, little was known about the specific genetic factors underlying RA risk in this ethnic group.

“As expected, we found that dozens of genes already known for RA from European and Asian populations also play an important role in Arabs. Surprisingly, we also found two new genetic factors that increase risk of RA in Arabs only but do not influence risk in these other populations. Biological and clinical follow-up studies on known and new genes will improve understanding of the causes of RA, and allow for better risk assessment in Arabs and opportunities to develop new RA therapies.”

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q, said: “This multicenter and multination regional study, which included international collaborations, illustrates the power of global collaborative science and the impact it can have on a better understanding of diseases in Qatar and the region. It further illustrates the impact that funding from Qatar National Research Fund can have on promoting collaborative science to the benefit of Qatar and the region.”
WCM-Q program boosts physician training and assessment skills.

A training program run by WCM-Q has equipped medical professionals with the knowledge to develop sophisticated practical examinations to comprehensively assess the skills of trainee physicians.

The course showed physician-educators from WCM-Q and Hamad Medical Corporation how to design and conduct an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) - one of the key teaching and assessment tools used in the training of doctors.

The OSCE utilizes ‘standardized patients’ - trained actors who play the role of patients - to create a lifelike simulated learning environment in which the clinician is tasked with conducting a thorough medical examination. This teaches and allows for the assessment of core practical skills such as how to take a medical history, check vital signs, perform various physical examinations to determine the health of the patient, and communicate effectively with a patient, among other competencies.

The course, entitled ‘Certificate Program in the Development of an Objective Structured Clinical Examination’, was delivered by WCM-Q’s Division of Continuing Professional Development and other WCM-Q faculty and staff in the college’s state-of-the-art Clinical Skills Center. In five sessions over six weeks, the course provided fifteen participants with the skills to design and deliver a comprehensive OSCE program to maximize learning outcomes and ensure effective assessment, such as how to set clear program objectives, write cases, devise appropriate checklists and scoring systems, give effective feedback to learners after assessment and train standardized patients.

WCM-Q’s Dr. Dora Stadler, clinical assistant professor of medicine, and Deema Al-Sheikhly, director of continuing professional development, directed the course.
Ms. Al-Sheikhly said: “By replicating real-life consultations between doctors and patients we are able to create very powerful learning and assessment experiences for trainees, and we can vary the circumstances of each case almost endlessly. This allows the trainee to develop a diverse ‘toolbox’ of skills so they can operate effectively in a variety of situations and with different patients, and our facilities at WCM-Q allow trainers to give very precise feedback. We are very pleased that the participants have shown so much commitment and enthusiasm to learn how to design and implement an effective OSCE program.”

The final learning session made use of the Clinical Skills Center’s hi-tech examination rooms, which are equipped with audiovisual monitoring systems that allow faculty to discreetly assess learners as they perform simulated consultations with standardized patients. This was the second year the course has been offered, and it will continue to run on an annual basis. Two physicians who completed the course last year as participants - Dr. Liam Fernyhough, assistant professor of medicine at WCM-Q, and Dr. Hassan Mobayad, allergy and pulmonary consultant at Hamad Medical Corporation - served as instructors this year. WCM-Q’s Dr. Stella Major, associate professor of family medicine in clinical medicine, and Lan Sawan, manager of the Clinical Skills Center, also facilitated the delivery of the program.

Course participant Dr. Shireen Suliman, associate consultant in internal medicine at Hamad Medical Corporation, said: “The program helped me understand how to develop cases and how to work with a standardized patient to create lifelike learning and assessment experiences for participants. I’m very pleased because this type of immersive experience is extremely effective as a training and assessment tool.”

“*We are able to create very powerful learning and assessment experiences for trainees.*”

Deema Al-Sheikhly said the program can be manipulated to provide a wide variety of scenarios.

Standardized patients are used to create a lifelike learning environment.
WCM-Q nutrition course is attracting healthcare professionals and gaining momentum.
The course gives detailed instructions on how to plan healthy nutrition regimens for all types of individuals, including children, adolescents, pregnant and lactating women, adults and the elderly. Attendees were drawn from many local institutions, including Qatar University, Aspetar, Sidra Medical and Research Center, Qatar Foundation, Hamad Medical Corporation and several private practices. All attendees who completed the course, which was held on four consecutive days, were awarded the Certificate in Clinical Nutrition.

Dr. Sohaila Cheema, director of the Institute for Population Health and assistant professor of healthcare policy and research, said: “We are very encouraged that so many healthcare professionals joined us and earned the Certificate in Clinical Nutrition. The medical profession has traditionally focused on treating disease rather than ensuring wellness and we are excited to be a part of the change towards a more balanced approach that uses enhanced knowledge of nutrition to help prevent people from becoming unwell in the first place.”

“Now imagine those positive effects multiplied by months or years – the benefits to health are potentially enormous. Not only will you feel great but you dramatically reduce your risk of suffering a whole range of very serious health conditions. That is why we feel so strongly that good education about nutrition is one of the most important things that can be done to improve public health."

This is the philosophy that motivated WCM-Q’s Institute for Population Health to create the Certificate for Clinical Nutrition, a comprehensive, intensive 50-hour course open to all healthcare professionals, educators, researchers and dieticians that provides enhanced knowledge of key issues relating to nutrition and health.

The course, which consists of 32 hours of direct, on-site contact at WCM-Q followed by 18 hours of online self-study, enables participants to gain in-depth knowledge of a wide variety of nutrition-related topics. These include the impact on health of popular nutritional and herbal supplements, elimination and anti-inflammation diets, Mediterranean diets, veganism and vegetarianism, the DASH diet (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), and the role of nutrition in the causation and management of chronic conditions such as obesity, cancer, heart disease, hypertension (high blood pressure) and diabetes. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as these now pose the greatest risk to public health globally, and they are particularly prevalent in the Gulf region. Data from the World Health Organization reveals that an estimated 13 percent of people in Qatar have diabetes, 76 percent are overweight and 41 percent are obese.

Successfully launched in May 2016, the first Certificate for Clinical Nutrition course attracted 51 attendees from a variety of institutions across Qatar. Recently the course was offered a second time and drew 55 participants, with one coming from as far afield as London, England and another joining from Bahrain.

Dr. Mamtani said: “The increased prevalence of non-communicable diseases like obesity, diabetes and heart disease is extremely worrying and the medical profession has to respond swiftly to protect public health. We believe the best way to do this is to equip as many healthcare practitioners as possible with comprehensive knowledge about nutrition, based on the very best and latest research, which is what our Certificate of Clinical Nutrition is designed to do.”
Choosing a career is not easy, but high school students from across Qatar have a better understanding of what life would be like as a doctor thanks to programs run by WCM-Q.

The enrichment programs at the college have been running since 2008 and offer promising high school students in years 9, 10, 11 and 12 the opportunity to study at WCM-Q for two weeks, attending lectures, speaking to faculty and medical students, experiencing healthcare lessons and finding out whether a career in medicine would be for them.

In all 23 students joined this year’s Qatar Medical Explorer Winter Program (QMEP), one of WCM-Q’s enrichment programs, of whom 100 per cent were Qatari. All the participants were nominated by their schools based on their academic performance and career interests.

Noha Saleh, director of student recruitment and outreach at WCM-Q, said QMEP is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about what life as a medical student is like, along with learning about the academic requirements.

She said: “It can be intimidating for young people to have to choose a subject to study at university while they are still at a relatively young age. These decisions have a huge impact on their lives so it is vital that they understand the
implications of any career choice and ensure that they are going to enjoy their work."

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, who handed the students their certificates of completion said: "After their full engagement in this program, these students have a greater understanding about the life of a medical student and doctor and I'm sure they all now realise how much work, study and dedication is needed. However, I also hope that they all realise how fulfilling it is to be able to cure people and help them in their hour of need."

Dr. Bendriss added: "We are also extremely grateful to all the students, faculty, and staff who volunteered their time and effort to make this program a resounding success." This year the high school students have been introduced to the basics of research and gained experience with driving simulators, visited Qatar Science and Technology Park to learn more about robotic surgery, taken hands-on classes in the biology laboratories, learned about surgical techniques, and taken part in student debates, among many other activities.

Noof Ali Al-Mazrooei said: "The interactive QMEP program held at WCM-Q is very beneficial for students that are trying to figure out whether medicine at WCM-Q is the right path. This two-week program not only gives you great insight into the student life of WCM-Q but also clears any mixed emotions you have towards medicine. Personally, this program strengthened my motivation towards pursuing medicine as a career."

Sara Abdulla Al-Mulla said: "I enjoyed every moment there, particularly as I got to know new people and become more social. I was a very shy person, but this program helped me become bold and talk to new people. This program also helped me see what university feels like and this will come in useful when I graduate from high school."

The QMEP also offers two distinguished achievement awards; the first is the Excellence Award that is presented to students who demonstrated excellence, leadership and motivation throughout the program. This year’s Excellence Award went to Noof Ali Al-Mazrooei from the Academic Bridge Program and Nawaf Ahmed Al-Muhannadi from Qatar Academy Doha School.

The second award is the JO Achievement Award, which is named after Dr. Jehan Al Rayahi and Dr. Osama Al Saied, graduates of WCM-Q’s Class of 2008 who initiated the first Summer Explorer Program back in 2008. The award is given to the students who show the most marked improvement during their participation in the program. The JO award went this year to Lolwa Sanim Bahzad from Al Maha Academy for Girls, Ghaya Nasser Al Suwaidi from Michael Debakey High School, and Isa Waleed Al-Mannai and Sultan Abdulla Al-Raban from the Academic Bridge Program.

Students in WCM-Q’s Foundation Program learn about Qatari culture at eclectic museum.

Foundation students from WCM-Q took a trip through time when they visited Sheikh Faisal Bin Qassim Al Thani’s museum.

Accompanied by faculty members and teaching specialists, the students had the chance to view the thousands of exhibits in Sheikh Faisal’s remarkable and eclectic collection. This includes classic cars, fossils, clothing, carpets, ceramics and many more items, particularly from the Islamic world.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, and associate professor of English as a second language, organized the trip.

Dr. Bendriss said: “Sheikh Faisal’s museum is a fascinating place which many people in Qatar are unaware of. The museum documents history on the Arabian Peninsula but also throughout the Arab, and indeed Western, world. Sheikh Faisal’s collection of classic cars is well known, but the museum also houses a vast number of artifacts including textiles, weaponry and manuscripts. There is a room dedicated to the Holy Qur’an, which features two of the world’s smallest and largest Qur’ans, and there is also a genuine traditional Syrian room dating from a century ago that has been built brick by brick.

“The students always enjoy the visit and it provides a great launch pad for discussions in the classroom and further learning.”

The Sheikh Faisal Museum is housed within a grand Qatari fort at Al Shahaniya. Established in 1998, the museum comprises more than 15,000 pieces collected from four continents, its aim being to inspire learning and build bridges between people of different ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds.
Foundation student Najla Al-Eshaq said it had been one of her best experiences at WCM-Q, and one that allowed her to feel the historical spirit of Qatari culture.

Najla said: “I really enjoyed my trip and I was surprised by how large the collection is, particularly the classic cars. There are some artifacts that I already knew about, but seeing them in reality was totally different. It is a great place to learn about the history of my culture and the museum also introduced me to different religions and their different acts of worship.

“I literally enjoyed every moment there.”

During the visit, Dr. Bendriss also offered a certificate of appreciation to Walid Al Dulaimi manager of the museum, for guiding WCM-Q students around the museum each year.

"Sheikh Faisal’s museum is a fascinating place which many people in Qatar are unaware of. The museum documents history on the Arabian Peninsula but also throughout the Arab, and indeed Western, world.”
ASSESSING THE DOCTORS OF THE FUTURE

College holds symposium to teach assessment skills in order to boost learning outcomes.
Leading WCM-Q scholars presented a series of workshops explaining the most effective new methods for assessing learners in health professional education.

The three-day symposium at WCM-Q, entitled Assessment in Health Professional Education, was led by Dr. Janice Hanson and Dr. Amal Khidir, associate professor of pediatrics; other speakers were Dr. Mai Mahmoud, assistant professor of medicine; and Dr. Ziyad Mahfoud, associate professor of healthcare policy and research.

The speakers used a series of interactive sessions to explain the latest assessment methods and instruments to faculty, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, interns, residents and allied health professionals.

Effective assessment tools are essential learning aids for health professionals who rely on comprehensive feedback from tutors to ensure they have gained the advanced skills and knowledge they need to provide quality care to patients.

Visiting expert Dr. Janice Hanson, director of educational research and development in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, said: “Traditional methods of assessment have often been based upon awarding grades and have tended to provide little or no narrative feedback to learners. This might be effective at communicating whether someone has passed or failed an exercise, but it is extremely ineffective at explaining the reasons why someone passed or failed, what they did right and what they did wrong. Crucially, it does not give enough feedback about what they need to do to improve their performance and meet the learning aims of the exercise.

“This is why assessment tools are so valuable. If we can provide learners with comprehensive feedback, whether narratively or using other methods, they can understand what they need to do to improve, which not only helps them target their learning but also boosts morale and motivation.”

In addition to demonstrating how to write high-quality narrative evaluations, the learning activity explained the strengths and weaknesses of several different methods of learner assessment, how to determine the validity of assessment instruments, and how to apply frameworks for evaluation to judgments about learners. The skills and knowledge taught by the workshops were applicable to both classroom-based and clinic-based learning exercises.

Dr. Khidir said: “It is really rewarding to see the level of engagement of the participants. Kerned to within an inch of its life. On a separate note, this activity engaged the students in professional development, too. The organizing committee is thankful to the fourth-year medical students Ali Khairat, Tarek Barbar, Diala Steitieh and Saleha Abbasi, and to our alumnus and now associate professor of emergency medicine, Dr. Grigory Ostrovskiy, who participated in the preparation of the videos that generated a lot of reflections and discussions that deepened the understanding of the concepts.”

The symposium, organized as part of the WCM-Q Division of Continuing Professional Development’s Educators Across the Health Care Spectrum series, used workshops, small and large group discussions, role-play and hands-on activities to allow participants to gain a thorough practical understanding of assessment tools. The event was open to participants from WCM-Q and from other health professions educational institutions in Qatar.

Deema Al-Sheikhly, director of continuing professional development, said: “Effective assessment is a vital part of any learning experience, but this has traditionally been somewhat overlooked and faculty often feel they require more formal training in this area. This seminar aimed to comprehensively answer that need.”
FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR STI RESEARCH

College joins multinational coalition of research institutions fighting against STIs.

WCM-Q has been awarded funding by a major UK trust to join efforts to reduce global prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

The UK-based Wellcome Trust, as part of a pan-European initiative called Europe and Global Challenges, in partnership with the Volkswagen Foundation and the Swedish Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, has awarded €891,000 ($967,000) to an international team of six leading research institutions that will collaborate to investigate the most effective ways that public policy can help to control STIs.

The initiative will have a particular focus on the health of refugees and migrants in selected countries of the Middle East and North Africa, West Asia, and Europe. The international team of research organizations comprises Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, University College London, the University of Bern in Switzerland, Tehran University of Medical Sciences in Iran, the Knowledge Utilisation and Community-based Participatory Research Center in Iran, and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

Dr. Laith Abu-Raddad, professor of healthcare policy and research, will be leading the WCM-Q component of the project, which will focus on mathematical modelling of the transmission of STIs and the epidemiology of STIs in the Middle East and North Africa. This component builds on a thriving program focused on studying the epidemiology of HIV and other STIs that has been built at WCM-Q over the past decade thanks to funding from Qatar National Research Fund.

The aim of the project is to examine the relationship between drivers of STI epidemics and the policy options for their prevention and control. The project will use a variety of methodological approaches to develop an evidence-based conceptual framework of STI vulnerabilities, increase understanding of the impact of...
“STIs reinforce social inequality and addressing them is a critical factor to improve public health and attain global sustainable development goals.”

Dr. Abu-Raddad said: “It is a great privilege to be awarded funding and be part of such an international team of science leaders to address this neglected infection and disease burden. STIs reinforce social inequality and addressing them is a critical factor to improve public health and attain global sustainable development goals.”

Professor Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research, said: “The impact that Dr Abu-Raddad’s team is making on our understanding of STI transmission in the region is exceptional. Expanding those efforts in the context of an international consortium with funding from the Wellcome Trust speaks volumes to the quality of the research undertaken and its international visibility. In addition, the research will have important implications for Qatar’s capacity and programs in addressing infectious disease challenges.”
CHILDREN LEARN TO LOVE HEALTHY EATING WITH YOUR HEALTH FIRST
Project Greenhouse teaches QLA cadets about healthy eating, science and sustainability.

A vast array of fruit and vegetables have been grown by children learning about health, nutrition, science and sustainability.

The students all took part in Project Greenhouse, an initiative from WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First campaign, that is designed to teach children not only where their food comes from, but also the types of food they should be eating to stay healthy and to avoid diabetes and obesity when they are older. Each year the 101 schools that have received a greenhouse from Your Health First compete to see who has the best harvest.

The winners have now been announced, with Qatar Leadership Academy (QLA), member of Qatar Foundation for education, science and community development in Al Khor claiming first prize by not only producing a bumper harvest, but also incorporating the greenhouses into a multitude of different lessons and community projects. Umm Salal Ali Model Independent School for Boys came second, and Omar Ibn El Khatab Educational Center came third.

Ali Jassim Al Kuwari, head of the Adult Education Section at the Ministry of Education, presented the trophy for first place.

He said: “Project Greenhouse is a wonderful program for so many reasons and has proved a great success over the past five years. Firstly, it offers students the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities and learn lessons that are not always included in the mainstream curriculum; focusing on extra-curricular activities has proven to have great benefits for children’s education. More than that, though, by educating our young people about health and nutrition at a young age, we can help create a healthy future generation, able to meet the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.”

Brigadier General Ali Ahmad Al Kuwari, director of Qatar Leadership Academy, said having the greenhouses had allowed the students to put theoretical lessons learned in the classroom into practice in the real world.

Brig. Gen. Al Kuwari added: “Project Greenhouse has been a great success and by planting the seeds, nurturing the plants and finally harvesting and eating the crop it has given our cadets a very real sense of achievement.

“More broadly speaking, Project Greenhouse has also taught our cadets about the environment, sustainability and the importance of caring for the natural world. The students have learned skills that they will take with them throughout their lives, and knowledge that one day they can pass on to their children.”

Fruit and vegetables grown by students at QLA include lettuce, parsley, tomatoes, chillis, eggplants and cilantro. They have also introduced mango trees and okra and even built an irrigation system to make watering the plants much easier. The next stage, said Sunny Joseph, science and technical coordinator at the school, is for solar panels to be installed. Mr Joseph said it was hoped to connect these to fans which would allow the school to extend the growing season through the summer.

He added: “The QLA greenhouse project inspired us to grow and consume organic vegetables. The greenhouses proved to be a valuable resource for advancing not only the science curriculum but also other subject areas. Students completed nine scientific investigations across the middle and high school classes using the greenhouse as a base. Other schools have also shown an interest in using our greenhouse for their scientific experiments and I would like to thank our students for inspiring the community to take an active role in meeting their dietary needs.”

Mr Joseph said that QLA’s English department had used the greenhouses as inspiration for reflective writing, while the humanities department was planning a farmers’ market for the community. There are also plans for an environmental study center at Al Khor Park.

Mr Joseph said: “The greenhouses have opened up huge possibilities.”
Students at the school are now planning a pizza party, using the next crop of organic vegetables as toppings.

Abdulaziz Al Jabari, who is in Grade 7A, said he had learned a lot.

He said: "I have learned how to grow vegetables from seeds and how to take care of them. I also learned how to water the plants properly. I will try to plant organic vegetables in my garden so that I can eat delicious fruits and vegetables."

Fellow student Mohamed Al Essae said: "It is not hard to plant and grow vegetables in a greenhouse. I learned to recognize when to harvest green leafy vegetables and fruit."

Ahmad Al Zeyara, who is also in Grade 7, had this message: "Grow organic vegetables in the greenhouse, if you want to eat vegetables that are fresh and not poisoned by chemicals. I will ask my friends and family to start a greenhouse at their homes."

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer at WCM-Q, praised the children and teachers all of the participating schools for their hard work.

Mrs Al-Rifai said: "Since its inception Project Greenhouse has proved to be a huge success, not only because it encourages children to eat and enjoy fruit and vegetables, but also because there has proved to be such a synergy with schools’ curriculums. As Qatar Leadership Academy have demonstrated so well this year, the greenhouses do not just teach children about cultivating plants and healthy diets. They can also be used in science lessons to teach children about humidity and temperature, math teachers can use them for lessons on measurements, geography students can learn about the effects of climate on crops, and, as QLA have shown, literature students can draw inspiration from the plants themselves.

"More than anything, though, we hope all the students at all our participating schools will take the lessons they have learned about healthy lifestyles with them throughout their lives. We want the next generation to be strong and healthy so they can continue to lead Qatar to success."
The cadets grew a vast array of different fruits and vegetables.

Qatar Leadership Academy even created an irrigation system for its greenhouses.
PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Career seminar series helps students to consider the medical specialty suitable for them.

Dr. Noor Suleiman, a graduate of WCM-Q, talked about her work in endocrinology.
Physicians and research professors have been providing students at WCM-Q with an insight into their professional lives as part of the Medical Career Seminar Series.

The spring lecture series is an annual event held for students who are taking WCM-Q's foundation program. Speakers included Dr. Wafa Al Yazeedi, assistant professor of clinical rehabilitation medicine and chairperson of the Physical Medicine Rehabilitation Department at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC); Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research at WCM-Q; and Dr. Samar Al Emadi, senior rheumatology consultant and head of the rheumatology section at HMC; and Dr. Noor Suleiman, a clinical fellow in endocrinology at HMC.

The aim is both to inspire students but also educate them so they know what to expect and can begin to consider the various medical career paths that are open to them.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs at WCM-Q, said it was important to inform students of the options open to them.

Dr. Bendriss said: “Medicine is a very varied field and although the initial MD degree requires students to have the same knowledge, specialist fields like surgery, pediatrics, radiology or emergency medicine all require different skills and offer very different career experiences.

It is important that students begin to think about the options open to them at a very early stage as it allows them to make more informed decisions and so makes it much more likely that they will choose the career path that best suits them.

“These lectures also show that there is more to a medical degree than just healthcare. Biomedical research is vital if new drugs and therapies are to be developed and for some students, a career in research is the perfect avenue for their talents.”

Student Noor Al-Nassr said it had been a worthwhile series that had opened their eyes to the opportunities available.

She said: “The medical career seminar gave us the opportunity to learn more about particular sub-specialties and enabled us to understand the complexities of each as well as allowing us to explore alternative careers in medicine. I personally loved the seminar series as it made me realize that even the most intelligent and successful physicians have had to overcome tough obstacles in the past, and that has motivated me to keep working hard. In the end, medical students study to save their patients; it is quite self-centered of us if we only think that we are studying for ourselves and these guest lecturers made us understand that.”
STUDENTS CELEBRATE COURSE COMPLETION

Faculty offer their congratulations and praise to all those who are one step nearer to becoming a doctor.

Dr. James Roach, Dr. Marco Ameduri and the completing students with laboratory coordinator Alexander Tejada, who is leaving WCM-Q having been at the college since its inception.
Foundation and second-year premedical students gathered for a ceremony to celebrate the successful completion of their programs.

This year, ten students completed the one-year Foundation Program, which is designed to equip talented high school graduates with advanced proficiency in English, math and the basic sciences in preparation for entry to WCM-Q’s six-year integrated program.

Meanwhile, 47 students completed the two-year premedical curriculum, which forms the first part of WCM-Q’s Six-Year Medical Program.

In attendance at the event to congratulate the students were Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, Dr. Marco Ameduri, associate dean for premedical education, and Dr. Rachid Bendriss, assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs.

Dr. Ameduri said: “All of you have worked extremely hard to be here today and you can feel very proud of what you have accomplished. I am certain that this success has inspired you to continue to work diligently towards the ultimate goal of becoming a doctor.”

Foundation student Aljazi Al-Khalifa said: “I can truly say that I have enjoyed every course on the program. It was a little overwhelming at first to be at college, but we quickly got used to it and actually it has been so much fun. We have learned so much and the experience has made me even more enthusiastic and excited about becoming a doctor.”

Students who complete the WCM-Q premedical curriculum and fulfill all academic requirements automatically gain promotion to the next four years of the program, during which they begin their clinical training. Completion of the entire six-year program leads to the same Cornell University M.D. degree that is awarded to students who graduate from Weill Cornell Medicine in New York.

Second-year premedical student Mohamed Ahmed said: “We have developed so much in two years and from a collection of individuals we have grown into a strong and close group. On a personal level, I feel that my professors and teaching specialists have not only helped me master a lot of difficult material but have also shown me how to learn and think independently.”

Dr. Sheikh said: “Completing either one of these programs is both an important milestone on the journey to becoming a doctor and a significant achievement in its own right. I offer all of our foundation and second-year premedical students my warmest congratulations and I look forward to seeing you continue on the path to becoming part of the next generation of doctors serving communities in Qatar, the region and the wider world.”
College partners with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy to improve the nutrition of people working on the infrastructure for the World Cup.

The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC), the organization responsible for delivering the infrastructure required for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, has entered into a partnership agreement with WCM-Q that will see the college contributing to the assessment of the health of workers on World Cup construction projects.

Working with workers, contractors and catering supply companies to improve workers’ nutrition, the assessments and training pilot program, which started in February, will see a team of experts from WCM-Q examine workers’ health, diets, and general awareness of the importance of nutrition. The team will also evaluate current nutritional intake and identify prevalent health challenges amongst workers, which improved nutrition may help to resolve.

The pilot program, which will initially target a random sample of 1,000 workers on SC projects, will be broken down into the following stages:
• Phase 1 – Health Checks & Reporting: WCM-Q to carry out basic health checks of 1,000 workers to determine prevalence of health related issues; including but not limited to: hypertension (high blood pressure); blood glucose; hydration status, body measurements, grip strength and respiratory parameters. The key findings will be compiled into a report outlining the recommendations for phases 2 & 3;

• Phase 2 – Awareness & Training Campaign (workers, contractors & caterers): WCM-Q will aim to educate the sample of 1,000 workers on the benefits of healthy lifestyles and balanced diets, and key stakeholders on the need to provide nutritious food options for workers. Access to dieticians and nutritionists will be provided;

• Phase 3 – Catering Enhancement & Reporting: WCM-Q will work collaboratively with contractors and catering suppliers to recommend nutritional food options for the sample of 1,000 workers via revised food options within their worksites and accommodation.

This landmark initiative, which is being launched with the Institute of Population Health at WCM-Q, will conclude with the release of a detailed report to the Supreme Committee that will summarize the outcomes, impact and key findings of the program, and make recommendations for future intervention.

Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, senior associate dean for population health, capacity building and student affairs at WCM-Q, said: “We are extremely happy to be partnering with the SC on this highly important initiative. We are particularly pleased that the initiative places such strong emphasis on practical steps to monitor the health of workers and take action to improve nutrition and understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet.”

The expert team from WCM-Q will be led by Dr. Shahrad Taheri, professor of medicine and assistant dean for clinical investigations, and Dr. Odette Chagoury, associate director of clinical research. Dr. Taheri and Dr. Chagoury both have a wealth of experience assessing the effectiveness of health and nutrition interventions.

Dr. Taheri said: “Nutrition plays a vital role in an individual’s health and even small changes to diet can make a huge difference to overall wellbeing. The impact of this initiative, both on the short and long-term health of workers associated with SC construction projects, could be significant, particularly if, as we hope, the findings are taken on board by other companies and international businesses operating in Qatar.”

This agreement is the latest addition to the SC’s workers’ welfare program, which seeks to ensure the health, safety and dignity of everyone on SC construction projects in Qatar. Workers’ welfare falls under the responsibility of the SC’s dedicated Workers’ Welfare Division, which has been tasked with ensuring that the 2022 FIFA World Cup leaves a lasting social legacy for workers in Qatar.

Hassan Al Thawadi, SC secretary general, welcomed the new initiative, saying: “Weill Cornell is a household name in medicine and we are delighted to partner with them on such an important program. Nutrition is a vital component of any healthy lifestyle and we’re hoping that through this new program we can uncover any prevalent or latent health concerns among our workers, address any issues that come to light and work collaboratively with our entire supply chain to make sure we improve our workers’ health and enable our contractors to offer balanced and nutritious options for workers.”

“The ultimate outcome of this program is happy and healthy workers with a more balanced diet and a better understanding of what they need to do themselves to keep healthy while working and living in Qatar.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “This initiative represents an exciting opportunity to tackle a global problem, that of nutritional deficiencies amongst migrant workers. Through this initiative, we therefore not only hope to better understand the specific nutritional needs of workers in Qatar, but also to educate them about diet so they can pass this knowledge on to their families when they return home.”

The launch of the program follows a number of other significant steps the SC has taken in the last 12 months to improve the welfare of workers on SC construction projects, including the signing of an MoU with the Building and Wood Workers’ International for joint health and safety inspections at accommodations and sites, and the launch of an innovative cooling technologies program involving the identification of cooling helmets, vests and towels for distribution to workers on SC sites.

The SC currently has eight construction sites underway across Qatar and just over 10,000 workers on-site at any given time. The number of workers engaged on SC construction projects is expected to rise to 36,000 in the next 12 months as various projects approach completion or the main works stage, with Khalifa International Stadium expected for completion shortly and the Al Wakrah and Qatar Foundation stadiums both rapidly heading towards their completion dates in 2018.”
HONOR FOR FACULTY MEMBER

Award states that recipients must have demonstrated distinction and peer recognition in pharmacology over a sustained period.

Dr. Triggle is a leading expert on the effects of metformin.
One of WCM-Q’s senior research faculty members has been elected a fellow of a leading medical society in his home country.

Dr. Chris Triggle, who joined WCM-Q in 2007, was made a Fellow of the British Pharmacological Society (BPS) in recognition of his contributions to the discipline of pharmacology over the course of a distinguished career that to date has spanned more than four decades.

Dr. Triggle, professor of pharmacology, is a leading authority on the effects of metformin, the world’s most widely used type 2 diabetes medication. His latest research has helped demonstrate that in addition to keep blood sugar levels under control by improving insulin sensitivity, metformin appears to have beneficial side-effects including anti-aging and anti-cancer properties.

Dr. Triggle said: “I feel very honored and happy to have been recognized by the society, which was completely unexpected and a very pleasant surprise. The BPS is a proactive society that does a great deal of good work to represent the discipline of pharmacology and also, crucially, to help translate basic research into clinical advances.”

BPS materials say of being elected a Fellow of the Society (FBPhS): “Fellows of the British Pharmacological Society are members who have demonstrated distinction and peer recognition in pharmacology over a sustained period. Our Fellows have made substantial contributions to the discipline and the Society, through their work, publications, and attendance at, and contribution to, Society meetings.”

Dr. Triggle was previously president of the Pharmacological Society of Canada (now the Canadian Society of Pharmacology & Therapeutics) and of the Western Pharmacology Society, an international organization. He also served on the international scientific advisory committee for two International Union of Pharmacology (IUPHAR) meetings, and chaired and helped organize multiple symposia, at which all of the national societies meet every four years, as well as many other international scientific meetings. He was the head of the Department of Pharmacology & Therapeutics at the University of Calgary, Canada from 1990 to 1999 and has been published multiple times in many leading journals, including the British Journal of Pharmacology, of which he was associate editor at one time.

Dr. Triggle added: “In my career I have been fortunate to see many dramatic advances in pharmacology research and the subsequent development of new and more effective drugs for treating many illness – it has been a very exciting time for the discipline. Looking forward, the new era of personalized medicine is already beginning to deliver very promising advances, particularly in chemotherapy drugs for treating cancer, but also in many other areas, so it looks as though there are even more exciting times ahead.”

Dr. Khaled Machaca, associate dean for research, said: “The election of Dr. Triggle to the BPS, one of the most prestigious pharmacological societies, is indeed a great and well deserved honor. Dr. Triggle’s research has been well-recognized internationally and has had considerable impact. During his tenure at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar he has built earnestly on the achievements of his earlier career, which has led to this important and significant honor.”

“Dr. Triggle’s research has been well-recognized internationally and has had considerable impact.”
POSTER TRIUMPH FOR STUDENTS

Your Health First Poster Competition inspires middle school students to get healthy.

The winners of the boys’ competition with their prizes.
Students from middle schools across Qatar learned vital messages about protecting their health when they took part in a poster competition organized by WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First campaign.

More than 350 students from 35 middle schools participated in the Sahtak Awalan Poster Competition, which challenged them to research a pressing public health issue and then present their findings in poster form. In total, more than 420 posters were submitted to the contest.

After the posters were judged by a panel of physicians and faculty members from the college, 25 students from eight schools were awarded trophies and mountain bikes for the exceptionally high standards of their posters. Certificates of achievement were presented to all participating students and student coordinators in acknowledgement of the very high standard of all entries.

Nesreen Al-Rifai, chief communications officer for WCM-Q, said: “We were extremely impressed by the hard work the students put into researching their posters and the artistic flair and invention they showed with their designs. Not only did the students demonstrate that they have learned the important messages about following healthy lifestyles, they also showed they have been inspired and energized to care for their health, which is a key goal of the Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First campaign.”

The eight schools with students that were awarded trophies and mountain bikes were Salah Eddine Al Ayoubi Independent Preparatory School for Boys, Al Ahnaf Bin Qais Independent Preparatory School for Boys, Audio Complexe Center for Boys, Audio Complexe Center for Girls, Al Hammad International Developed School, Al Manar International School, Qatar Leadership Academy, and English Modern School Al Khor.

Dr. Mohamud Verjee, associate professor of family medicine at WCM-Q, presented the trophies and mountain bikes to the winning schools and students at an awards ceremony held at WCM-Q.

Students presented posters on a wide range of health topics, including road safety, the dangers of smoking, obesity, the health risks associated with poor diet, the increasing prevalence of type-2 diabetes, and the negative impact on health of excessive consumption of refined sugar, among many others.

Student Abdulla Bandar, 15, of Salah Eddine Al Ayoubi Independent Preparatory School for Boys said: “We presented a poster about traffic accidents because we got some data from a government website that said this is one the leading causes of death in Qatar. We wanted to create something to tell everyone to slow down and take care on the roads so that everyone can be safe. It was good fun and we learned a lot.”

Lydia Elija, 15, of Al Manar International School, created a poster about the benefits of exercise and how it can protect people from becoming obese. She said: “I put my own experiences into my poster to explain that exercise strengthens the circulatory system, the respiratory system and your muscles, as well as making you feel happier and fighting obesity. My favorite ways to exercise are playing football, basketball and volleyball but it doesn’t matter what you do as long as you find something you love.”

Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First is WCM-Q’s innovative public health campaign that aims to promote and facilitate healthy lifestyles across the whole of the community, with a special emphasis on young people.

Hoda Al-Siblani, science teacher at Al Manar International School said: “The research the students did for the posters enhanced their scientific knowledge about health issues and made them think deeply and analytically about the impact diet and exercise has on their own lives. They gained very valuable learning experiences from taking part.”

Awards were presented by Dr. Mohamud Verjee, associate professor of family medicine at WCM-Q.
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

Winning faculty members are announced after students vote for their favorite teachers.

The efforts and accomplishments of outstanding faculty and staff over the past academic year were acknowledged at the 2017 Excellence in Teaching Awards ceremony.

WCM-Q faculty, students and staff assembled at Chef’s Garden at Al Shaqab to see Master of Ceremonies Dr. Rodney Sharkey announce awards for the winning teachers across the pre-medical and medical curriculum, determined by a popular vote among students. This year’s ceremony also featured additional awards, four of which recognized the dedicated service of course directors of the previous curriculum, plus one “New Curriculum Pioneer” award.

Opening the event, Dr. Sharkey, associate professor of English, drew parallels between the Excellence in Teaching Awards and the Academy Awards. Quipping that he hoped not to muddle the envelopes, Dr. Sharkey said: “As they cast their votes, students said time and again that the passion and enthusiasm our faculty bring to the classroom is infectious and inspiring. Truly, our faculty sprinkle a little stardust into the lives of our students, just like the stars of the silver screen.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said: “I would like to thank all of our staff and faculty for the tremendous work they do. They so frequently go beyond the call of duty in service to our students and to the art of teaching itself. I also offer my warmest congratulations to those faculty whose exceptional contributions to teaching and to WCM-Q have been recognized here today.”

Music at the event was provided by the nine members of the newly formed WCM-Q student band, Unplugged, who variously played the violin, guitar, piano, flute, clarinet and saxophone. The faculty extended their thanks to the members of Unplugged: Amina Kunnummal, Gi-Eun Kim, Irfan Helmy, Josia Schlägl, Jungyoon Jung, Priyamvada Pillai, Seon Woo Kim, Yanal Shaheen and Yi Li, as well as Dr. Mohamud Verjee for coordinating the performance.
Winners of the Excellence in Teaching Awards 2017

Pre-Medical Education Awards

Foundation Year: Dr. Rachid Bendriss, Dr. Clare McVeigh
1st Year Science: Dr. Kuei Chiu Chen, Dr. James Roach
English Writing: Dr. Rodney Sharkey
2nd Year Science: Dr. Moncef Ladjimi, Dr. Syed Naqi, Dr. Kevin Smith
Teaching Specialist: Dr. Dalia Zakaria
Teaching Specialists Honorably Mentioned: Dr. Nande Choony

Medical Education Awards

Foundational Sciences Curriculum

Essential Principles of Medicine Course: Dr. Ameed Raoof, Dr. Ali Sultan
Host Defenses Course (For AY 2015-16): Dr. Ali Sultan
Brain and Mind Course: Dr. Naim Haddad
Basis of Diseases Course: Dr. Gerardo Guiter
Medicine, Patients and Society II Course: Dr. Stella Major

Clinical Curriculum

Clinical Clerkships and 4th Year Courses: Dr. Laith Abu-Raddad, Dr. Badreldeen Ahmed, Dr. Naim Haddad, Dr. Amal Khidir

Visiting Faculty

1st Year: Dr. Domenick Falcone
2nd Year: Dr. Marc Dinkin
3rd and 4th Year: Dr. Mark Pecker

Recognition Awards

New Curriculum Pioneer: Dr. Lotfi Chouchane
Molecules, Genes and Cells Course Directors: Dr. Khalid Machaca, Dr. Nasrin Mesaeli
Human Structure and Function Course Director: Dr. Dietrich Büsselberg
Host Defenses Course Director: Dr. Ali Sultan
Medicine, Patients and Society I Course Director: Dr. Stephen Scott
HAPPENINGS

Basant

Aisha Al-Shawani prepares to go and fly a kite.

Soapy football provided some good, clean fun.

Sharan Yadav with her kite.

Bilal Jaradat, Khalid Taha, Mohammed Sheriff and Anchalia Chandrakumaran take a selfie.

Hania Ibrahim, Gowri Ganesan and Tehniyat Baig.

Walathanthringe Botheju’s kite takes to the air.
The Med Gala 2017

Saleha Abbasi, Fathima Ameeruden and Zahra Habibur Rahman.

Striking a pose: Abdallah Tom, Wajha Yousuf, Tehniyat Baig, Hania Ibrahim and Basel Humos.

Fatema Al-Wahshi, Toqa Afifi, Sara Mohamed and Tehniyat Baig.

The event is an annual highlight of the students’ calendar.

Diala Steitieh and Abdallah Tom.

The Med Gala is a chance to dress up and have fun.
HAPPENINGS

The Children's Medical Fair

Above and below: Children were able to learn about healthy lifestyles with their parents.

The fair was a chance to burn off some energy.

Young visitors show off their health stickers.

The fair was organised by WCM-Q students.

Med 3’s Sarah Khan looks over the event.
Students vs Staff Football Match

Ahmed Fares lines up a pass.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss slides a penalty past the keeper.

Research Division’s Yasser Majeed dodges a tackle.

Facilities Management’s John Dolg keeps his eye on the ball.

Hissa Al Hall helped cheer the players on.

Youth finally overcame experience with the match ending 5-2 to the students.
Care. Discover. Teach.

Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar is so much more than just a medical school. It’s an institution known around the world for its groundbreaking research, collaborative environment, a powerful network of partnerships, top-tier education from dedicated professionals, and best-in-class care. Our mission? To put patients at the very center of everything we do. The finest care. Always.

Connect with us

Facebook: WeillCornellQatar
Twitter: WCMQatar
Instagram: WeillCornellQatar
YouTube: WeillCornellQatar

www.qatar.well.cornell.edu