Road traffic fatality rate in Qatar fell from 23 deaths per 100,000 in 2007 to 14 in 2010, according to an official of Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q).

Dr Sohaila Cheema, director of Global and Public Health at WCMC-Q was speaking at the Ask the Expert interactive public seminar as part of the college’s Sahtak Awalan, Your Health First campaign.

Cheema, a public health professional with a special interest in road safety, explained that Qatar has made significant progress in its efforts to reduce fatalities on the roads, most notably by increasing the number of speed cameras from 14 to 84 in 2007.

“Until 2007, almost two-thirds of all trauma-related deaths in Qatar were caused by road accidents and in 2006, traffic-related death rates in Qatar reached an all-time-high of 26 per 100,000 people. The installation of many more speed cameras made a very big and positive impact,” she said.

“I cannot emphasise strongly enough the importance of each and every one of us committing to driving safely. It could save a great many lives and save families the heartbeat of losing loved ones to avoidable road accidents.”

Cheema said it was essential for all road users to obey speed limits, wear seat belts and help ensure the safety of fellow road users by using indicators, turning headlights on at night, and by avoiding aggressive or reckless behaviour such as tailgating, cutting in, driving in the emergency lane and overtaking in inappropriate or risky situations.
She also stressed the importance of not using mobile phones while driving and said that it is essential to use age-appropriate, properly installed car restraints or car-seats for children, as well as ensuring that all vehicles are in good working order. Additionally, all motorcyclists should wear good quality helmets.

“Road traffic accidents cause a huge numbers of deaths, injuries and disabilities all over the world every year, and a great many of these tragedies are preventable,” Cheema said.

“Dangerous driving does not only put your own life at risk, but it also endangers the lives of other road users, so we all have a duty to drive carefully and create a safe road environment for all road users. If someone angers you by driving badly, do not react by engaging in aggressive behaviour or road rage. Remember that motor vehicles can and do kill, so stay calm and focused and carry on with your journey safely.”

WCMC-Q’s Division of Global and Public Health is recognised for its research contribution on road safety in Qatar. The division undertook a major research study that investigated the impact of cameras on road traffic fatalities in the country. The study showed that installation of cameras significantly reduced road traffic accident fatalities.