



BULLETIN

1 April 2008

Historic match day

March 20 – match day – saw history in the making at WCMC-Q, as 14 of the 15-member Class of 2008 successfully matched to residencies in their chosen specialties.

They are the first home-grown medical students in Qatar to go through the ‘match’, the competitive process by which all med school fourth years and graduates aiming to do residencies in the U.S. secure places in residency programs.

Their reactions? “I’m ecstatic,” said Mashaal Al Khulaifi, who matched to an anesthesiology residency at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center. “I’m glad I got my first choice – Cornell. It’s all good.”

As it was too for Rana Biary, Subhi Al Aref and Kunali Dalal, all of whom will be joining Al Khulaifi next year at Weill Cornell. And for their classmates, who matched to residencies at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore; Rush University Medical Center in Chicago; and the University of Minnesota, among others.

Three class members have chosen to do residencies at Hamad Medical Corporation in Qatar: Khalid Al Khelaifi and Osama Alsaied opted for surgery, while Jehan Al Rayahi is pursuing her dream of becoming a radiologist.

Meanwhile, Aisha Yousuf is to conduct research in obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Michigan, rather than enter a residency program next year.

The newly matched students are a diverse group, with chosen specialties that include family medicine, internal medicine, surgery, radiology, obstetrics and gynecology, emergency medicine, neurosurgery and anesthesiology.

Dean of WCMC-Q, Dr. Daniel Alonso sent his congratulations from New York, where he was on a business trip. “Your credentials, commitment, motivation, and perseverance have resulted in extraordinary success,” he told the students. “Yours is a very impressive achievement, one that is admired by all of us at WCMC-Q, at Weill Cornell Medical College and at Cornell University.”

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Dr. Maya Hammoud, Senior Associate Dean for Education, added her congratulations to the students – and the faculty and staff who supported them over the last six years: “This is all teamwork. We all have to work together to accomplish what we accomplished today.”

Addressing the inaugural class at a reception in their honor, Dr. Hammoud added: “You deserve a lot of credit for embarking on this great adventure. There were a lot of challenges, like with any new program . . . You all did amazingly well in your matches, and we are very proud of you.”

(With reporting by Lauren Gold, Cornell University science writer).

Events

World Kidney Day focuses on prevention and transplantation

From a Walkathon along Doha’s Corniche, to a symposium on chronic kidney disease, and a ceremony recognizing community and individual contributions to kidney patients’ treatment: Qatar this year put greater emphasis than ever on marking World Kidney Day, March 13.

Foremost among the speakers invited by Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) was **Dr. Manikkam Suthanthiran**, Stanton Griffis Distinguished Professor of Medicine, and Chief of Nephrology and Hypertension, and of Transplantation Medicine and Extracorporeal Therapy, at NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Dr. Suthanthiran reviewed progress made in kidney transplantations since the first-ever successful transplant operation in the U.S. in 1954, and approaches to the post-operative care of patients, focusing on how research in his laboratory and in others is contributing to improved management of rejection and infection.

Ahead lies the promise of a move away from treating patients as a group towards more individualized treatment, as a result of better understanding and detection of the process of organ rejection, he said.

HMC highlighted the need to raise public awareness of the importance of organ donation, regarded as a priority by the authorities in Qatar. Dr. Suthanthiran and **Dr. Bakr Nour**, professor and Vice Chairman of Surgery at WCMC-Q, noted that “synergistic collaboration” between Weill Cornell in New York and Qatar, and HMC, could take Qatar’s transplantation program to international levels.

<http://qatar-med.cornell.edu/mediaNews/reports/2008/worldKidneyDay.html>

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Faculty News

1. Dr. Michael Johnson appointed Associate Dean for Pre-medical Education

Dr. Michael Johnson has been appointed Associate Dean for Pre-medical Education. He succeeds Dr. David Robertshaw, professor of physiology, who held the position for six years from the opening of WCMC-Q.

With a doctoral degree in physiology from the University of Michigan, Dr. Johnson went on to have a distinguished career at West Virginia University (WVU) School of Medicine, attaining the rank of professor of physiology in 1988. From 2001-2006, he was founding Dean of the Oman Medical College, a new private medical school in the Sultanate of Oman, in which WVU had an advisory role.

A seasoned educator, Dr. Johnson was among faculty leading modernization of the medical curriculum at WVU in the 1990s. In his administrative capacity at WCMC-Q, Dr. Johnson is working on implementing the planned extension of the Pre-medical Program from two to three years and increasing students' opportunities to experience research.

"This would decompress the pre-med years and allow students to take electives, social sciences and humanities that they don't now get a chance to take. We believe these opportunities will produce more well-rounded doctors," he said.

2. Medical education in the spotlight

Dr. Maya Hammoud, Senior Associate Dean for Education, gave a presentation entitled "Hot Topics in Medical Education," March 7, at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the Council on Resident Education in Obstetrics and Gynecology/Association of Professors of Obstetrics and Gynecology. The meeting, on the theme: *Refocusing our Educational Vision: Accountability, Cultural Sensitivity and Competence*, was held in Orlando, Florida.

3. Workshop on health-care challenges and planning

Faculty members were among speakers at a three-day workshop entitled *Human Health and Environmental Challenges in the Middle East*, organized by the Fulbright Academy of Science and Technology, and Qatar Foundation, and hosted by WCMC-Q and Texas A&M University at Qatar, March 23-25. Changing environmental pressures in the Middle East region, their effects on human health, and the implications for planning future nursing capacity were the focus of the meeting.

Dr. Ravi Mamtani, professor of clinical public health at WCMC-Q, spoke on the changing demands on health-care workers, as people are living longer, the prevalence of chronic diseases is increasing, and public access to Internet-based information resources is transforming the practitioner-patient relationship.

"Today's health-care practitioners realize that their role in this evolving health-care profession is becoming complex and requires multiple skills," he said.

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Also speaking was **Dr. Renee Richer**, lecturer in biology, who explored the link between genetics, the environment and asthma among children in Qatar.

4. Dr. Mohamud Verjee, assistant professor of family medicine, presented a workshop on thyroid disorders at the 53rd Annual Scientific Assembly in Banff, Canada, March 1, under the auspices of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. Dr. Verjee was also the recipient of a 2007 Award of Excellence in Family Medicine from the Alberta College of Family Physicians of Canada, in recognition of his “outstanding dedication” to teaching.

5. Among English faculty **Dr. Marina Dodigovic**, assistant professor, presented at the 25th annual Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium conference “Bridging CALL Communities” hosted by the University of San Francisco. In “Speech recognition technology: a cure for test anxiety?” she addressed a validation study concerning an application of speech processing technology in language testing, a cutting edge technological advance which revolutionizes the assessment of spoken language. Meanwhile, **Dr. Krystyna Golkowska**, senior lecturer, gave a presentation entitled “Dynamic assessment in teaching ESL speaking” at the TESOL Arabia conference, Dubai, March 12-15.

Student News

1. Pre-meds carry off national debating trophy

From local ‘friendlies’ to a national competition, WCMC-Q’s students have taken to debating with enthusiasm in recent weeks.

While foundation students debated numerous topics in a series of encounters with friends and former colleagues in Education City’s Academic Bridge Program (ABP), pre-meds and meds went head-to-head in the final of the QatarDebate National Universities’ Debating Championship, March 14.

It was the culmination of a round-robin tournament that pitted teams from WCMC-Q against colleagues from Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, College of the North Atlantic-Qatar, the ABP and CHN-Qatar.

Proposing the Motion: *This House believes the government should never censor political comment*, the pre-med women’s team of Nadine Saad, Rahima Sanya and Marwa Saleh narrowly defeated the men - Anas Abou-Ismael, Anas Ahmed and Adam Khader, Class of 2010.

Judging the competition were visiting members of the Oxford Debating Union, who also awarded individual recognition to Abou-Ismael, Khader and Saleh. The event was organized by Qatar Foundation’s QatarDebate, a spin-off from the Doha Debates.

Dr. Rodney Sharkey, assistant professor of English, and coach and coordinator of WCMC-Q’s teams, said the championship tapped into the enthusiasm of students at the Medical College: “There was such a groundswell of desire to have debates – I constantly had students asking me about them.”

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Part of this arose from mini-debates in his First Year Writing Seminar for pre-meds; and part from the extraordinary influence of the Doha Debates, at which WCMC-Q students are often present and ready with questions for the speakers.

<http://qatar-med.cornell.edu/mediaNews/reports/2008/nationalDebating.html>

2. Student research presented in Oman

Pre-meds Abdullah Firoze, Zainab Hejji and Benazir Karim presented findings from their ongoing research into the tradition of healing in Qatar at the First International Medical Student Conference held at Oman Medical College, March 26-28. As part of the plenary discussion “Islam and Medicine” they described Islamic healing practices, drawing on the Qur’an and the *hadiths* (Prophet’s sayings) in the historical context and as currently practiced in Qatar.

While the presentation was based on secondary sources, their research will include ethnographic interviews and photographs of local practitioners, said lecturer in English and mentor for the project, **Autumn Watts**. The work is supported by Qatar National Research Fund’s Undergraduate Research Experience Program.

“Their presentation received much praise from attending medical students and faculty. I believe these opportunities for scholarly exchange at the undergraduate level are exciting and important, and I hope even more students will be encouraged to pursue them,” said Watts.

3. Foundation students hold Cultural Day event

Traditional dishes and henna decoration for ladies were features of a Cultural Day organized by Foundation Program students, March 19. The event was attended by guests including Vice Dean **Havva Idriss**, Associate Dean **Dr. Michael Johnson**, and Senior Associate Dean **Dr. Maya Hammoud**. Also featured were presentations by students, and by faculty members **Drs. Imad Makki, Renee Richer** and **Krystyna Golkowska**.

Distributed eLibrary update

1. Getting the reading habit

The Distributed eLibrary now has a reading corner for the Foundation Program students. Initiated by **Dr. Marina Dodigovic**, assistant professor of English, the collection contains some 60 graded readers specifically designed for ESL students. Such materials have been found to contribute to reading fluency and vocabulary development. In a culture which is primarily oral and for students in whose families they may be the first or the second generation exposed to literacy, having access to books that are at the right level and reading one every week, is an accomplishment.

Acquiring a new reading habit is likely to add about 2000 new English words to their vocabulary, which with college age ESL students generally ranges from 1000-3000. Since a native speaker of the same age confidently uses 20,000 vocabulary units, it is important for ESL students to read books in English, particularly books in which they understand 90-95 percent of the vocabulary, to facilitate further vocabulary acquisition. Our ESL collection meets these criteria and is being put to good use by the students.

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2. Linguistic diversity

The Distributed eLibrary now offers access to Rosetta Stone – Language Learning System. Affiliates of WCMC-Q can learn a wide variety of languages: Arabic, English, Spanish or Italian, to mention a few. Rosetta Stone covers topics from the weather to shopping and makes an excellent companion to a language course. To register to learn a language or brush up on one you already know, point your browser to the following link:

<http://elibrary.qatar-med.cornell.edu/screens/HDI-RosettaStone.htm>

3. Searching made easy

eStacks+, a journal management system implemented recently, offers searching capabilities at the journal and article levels; providing quick access to full-text articles. Besides convenient search features eStacks+ offers quick links to subject guides, interlibrary loan, course reserve and course support. You can try it out at: <http://0-www10.tdnet.com.elibrary.qatar-med.cornell.edu/frames.asp>

Outreach

1. Pre-med faculty go out and about

Seven pre-medical faculty members took part in a science and math Olympiad, hosted by Doha Independent Secondary School for Boys, March 23-27. They reviewed test questions, provided more, and were present to monitor proceedings and announce the winners.

Teams of students from six secondary schools in Qatar competed in Internet-based, timed tests in biology, chemistry, math and physics.

Commenting on the positive - yet competitive - atmosphere, senior lecturer in physics and Assistant Dean for Pre-medical Education, **Dr. Marco Ameduri** said: "I think the presence of universities from Education City lends weight to the event. Clearly, we established a good precedent of collaboration with the school. I hope that next year, we can work with them even more closely."

A career exhibition, including booths set up by WCMC-Q and Hamad Medical Corporation, showcased the growing opportunities in medical education and health care in Qatar.

"The more information school students have about what it means to be a doctor, the more it will help them make their choice," Dr. Ameduri commented. "And it will help their families in understanding what their kids are expected to do in school and afterwards – so it becomes part of their long-term perspective."

2. Focus on teaching academic writing

18 participants joined in an Education City working lunch "Teaching Academic Writing: Issues and Concerns," sponsored by WCMC-Q's Foundation Program, March 17, led by **Dr. Krystyna Golkowska**, senior lecturer in English. They included foundation and pre-med writing faculty, and

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Associate Dean for Pre-medical Education, **Dr. Michael Johnson**; and representatives from the Qatar campuses of Northwestern, Georgetown, Virginia Commonwealth and Carnegie Mellon Universities, as well as the Academic Bridge Program and Al Bayan Scientific School for Girls.

The purpose was to generate ideas for future meetings on aspects of teaching academic writing in Qatar. Core topics were challenges faced by students and instructors (reading comprehension, reading extensively, knowledge of academic discourse, high school preparation). Participants shared their experience and expressed support for cooperating with English high school teachers. The next meeting is planned for fall 2008.

3. Literary Lectures ongoing

Running throughout April: literary lectures by writing faculty, Mondays at 7:00 p.m., Lecture Hall 4, WCMC-Q. Open to the general public, this second series of informal talks follows the successful initial series offered in 2007. Topics range from women in medicine to the legacy of James Joyce, and include a mixed-media exploration of Nevada, and poetry inspired by the expatriate experience.

April 7: *Expat Sketchbook and Other New Poems*. A reading and discussion by prize-winning poet, **Peter Fortunato, MFA.**

April 14: *A Brief History of Women in Medicine*, by **Alan Weber, PhD.**

April 21: "*Nevada is a Great Wide _____*": *A Mixed-Media Exploration*, by **Autumn Watts, MFA.**

April 28: "*It's a James Joyceous Life!*" *Articulating the Legacy of an Immodest Irish Novelist*, by **Rodney Sharkey, PhD.**

For more, please contact Rodney Sharkey @ rxs2001@qatar-med.cornell.edu

Campus links

Dr. Marina Dodigovic initiated a "key pal" project for email correspondence between WCMC-Q's foundation students and undergraduate Cornell University students in Ithaca, in collaboration with **Dr. Katy Gottschalk**, the Director of Cornell's Knight Writing Institute. In addition to writing for a real audience, the foundation students are learning about Ithaca and making friends who may assist them during their summer school visit to the campus. On both sides, this has been warmly welcomed as an important means of cultural exchange.

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