



Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar



BULLETIN

May 1, 2008

Inaugural Graduation

A milestone in medical education

This month, a milestone is reached in the annals of medical education. The pioneering Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar – the first medical school to offer the M.D. degree of an American university outside the USA – graduates its inaugural class, May 8.

The ceremony, which takes place in the Ritz-Carlton, Doha, will be attended by leaders of Cornell University, Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City, dignitaries from Qatar and distinguished guests from around the world.

This is a landmark event for Qatar, and for Qatar Foundation: never before have young doctors graduated from a medical college in this Gulf state.

President of Cornell University, **Dr. David J. Skorton**, will give the keynote address and confer the Cornell M.D. degree on the fifteen members of the class. They include nine women and six men, with Qatar having the largest representation among the seven nationalities in the class.

The student address is to be delivered by Qatari **Jehan Al Rayahi**, who was selected to represent the graduating inaugural class by her classmates.

The historic graduation celebration begins with the May 7 Honors Convocation for special recognition of outstanding performance by students, when awards are presented for excellence in scholarship, clinical education and research, as well as for distinguished contributions in service.

Qatar Foundation to hold Senior Convocation

A day earlier, on May 6, Qatar Foundation recognizes the achievement of WCMC-Q's young physicians at the inaugural Senior Convocation of Education City, where they will be honored by **His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of Qatar**, and by **Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned**, wife of the Emir and Chairperson of Qatar Foundation.

They will be joined by the first students to graduate in engineering from Texas A&M University at Qatar, and in computer science and business administration from Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar. Also taking part are students graduating in design arts from Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, which opened its doors to undergraduates ten years ago this year.

In all, 119 graduates representing a total of 18 nationalities are graduating from Education City this month, marking an historic moment in Qatar Foundation's vision to bring world-class education to an international community of students in the Gulf State.

Office of Public Affairs
WCMC-Q
Education City
P.O. Box 24144
Doha, Qatar

Michael Vertigans
Director
Phone: +974 492 8650
Fax: +974 492 8444
Email: miv2008@qatar-med.cornell.edu

Sylvia Ismail
Associate Editor/Writer
Phone: +974 492 8651
Fax: +974 492 8444
Email: smi2001@qatar-med.cornell.edu

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WCMC-Q Inaugural Class to join in Commencement in New York

The month's celebrations culminate with Commencement for the Class of 2008 of Weill Cornell Medical College, which takes place in Carnegie Hall, New York, May 29. WCMC-Q's graduates will join their colleagues on the occasion, in recognition of their place as graduates of the Medical College who have received the same M.D. degree as their classmates enrolled in the 'mother ship'.

End of Year Celebrations

May also sees celebrations for students who have completed other, important stages of their education at WCMC-Q – notably those moving on from the two-year pre-medical phase, and those who have completed the year-long Foundation Program offered by the Medical College for the first time during the academic year 2007-2008.

i. Pre-meds achieve remarkable success

With a remarkable track record in the academic sphere, and a strong commitment to community service, the 35-strong second year pre-medical class has exemplified the qualities and strengths of the WCMC-Q student body over the past two years. As they celebrate the end of the year, May 14, congratulations to those who are moving on to the Medical Program!

Also noteworthy: 11 class members will travel to Cornell University in Ithaca to do research over the summer. Eight have been awarded summer research fellowships by WCMC-Q; three are self-funded. They will be working in some of Cornell's top labs in the Colleges of Veterinary Sciences, and Arts & Sciences, mostly in the field of molecular biology, with a biomedical emphasis.

ii. Foundation students round off a great year

Marking the end of a highly successful – and densely packed – year of study and self-discovery at WCMC-Q, the 18-member Foundation Class get together May 1 for a special celebration.

High praise for the students comes from senior lecturer in physics and Director of the Program, **Dr. Imad Makki**: "They are a brilliant group. From day one, they've shown motivation and commitment... We are delighted to see that the majority of them have been admitted to the Pre-medical Program."

Predominantly Qatari, the class followed an intensive program of studies in the basic sciences, math and English, with additional workshops to perfect their study and test-taking skills. Regular career seminars provided an excellent introduction to the realities of life and work as a physician as seen through the eyes of WCMC-Q's own medical faculty.

Active outside the classroom, the students have become confident debaters thanks to a series of debates with colleagues from Education City's Academic Bridge Program. Meanwhile, essays by five class members (**Nadya Al Awainati, Sarah Al Khawaga, Aljazy Al Maraghi, Kholoud Saleh and Zahra Makki**) were selected for inclusion in *Qatari Narratives*, an anthology of writing by women in Qatar, to be published this month by Qatar University in collaboration with the U.S. Middle East Partnership Initiative.

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Michael Vertigans
Director
Phone: +974 492 8650
Fax: +974 492 8444
Email: miv2008@qatar-med.cornell.edu

Sylvia Ismail
Associate Editor/Writer
Phone: +974 492 8651
Fax: +974 492 8444
Email: smi2001@qatar-med.cornell.edu

Faculty News

1. Dr. Imad Makki, senior lecturer in physics, has been appointed Assistant Dean for Research Administration. Director of the Foundation Program since he joined WCMC-Q in 2006, Dr. Makki will continue with these responsibilities while also organizing summer research fellowships for WCMC-Q students in Qatar and the U.S. Developing a program he initiated in the spring semester, he will introduce research training for high school students as a way to motivate them for careers in medicine and biomedical research. Finally, he will act as liaison between the Medical College and Qatar National Research Fund, coordinate competitive external research funding from national and international sources and administer the process of internal review of planned research applications by faculty and students.

Dr. Makki brings a wealth of experience to his new post. He worked for the Ford Motor Company Research Laboratory in the U.S. for 15 years, where he initiated, funded and managed multiple research collaboration programs with several universities, generating numerous patents, and journal and conference papers, and winning a number of awards for his work.

2. Professor of Public Health, Dr. Ravinder Mamtani, gave a presentation to health care workers in Qatar on the topic of avian influenza (H5 N1) during an awareness day organized by the National Health Authority (NHA), April 7. He examined two main themes: the epidemiology of avian flu in birds, and the infections that have occurred in human beings. He looked at the geographical distribution of clusters of cases of H5 N1; explored the lethal nature of the disease in humans, with a mortality rate as high as 60 percent; and summarized the conditions that might precede a pandemic, notably a mutation in the virus.

Also speaking at the event were NHA senior officials Dr. Gail Chanpong, Director of Public Health, and Dr. Shazia Nadeem, Head of Emergency Preparedness, Communicable Disease Control Division. In an interview, Dr. Nadeem said the NHA is working with Hamad Medical Corporation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture, the oil industry and port authorities on plans for any future influenza emergency in Qatar. She also emphasized the importance of raising public awareness of simple preventive measures (e.g. in the area of personal hygiene).

3. In a series of literary lectures held throughout the month, **WCMC-Q's English faculty** took time out from the classroom to present their poetry and research, and to explore landscapes of mind and place. They ranged far and wide – from late Renaissance Italy to the atomic test sites of Nevada, and from ancient Egyptian medicine to James Joyce's *Dubliners* – in front of an audience from within and outside the Medical College.

A virtuoso performance by senior lecturer **Peter Fortunato** got the series off to a heady start as he captivated the audience with his *Expat Sketchbook* and other new poems. There followed a "brief history" of women in medicine from **Dr. Alan Weber**, assistant professor; an exploration of the natural and unnatural history of Nevada in photographs and writing by lecturer **Autumn Watts**; and – in a rousing finale – a provocative take on the work and legacy of Irish writer James Joyce, by assistant professor, **Dr. Rodney Sharkey**.

This second series of lectures was well received – a third is promised for 2009.

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4. Peter Fortunato, who is also Coordinator for the First Year Writing Seminars, was invited to read his poems at the American School of Doha, April 15, in honor of America's National Poetry Month. Aside from giving the reading, he discussed the connection between medicine and the humanities, and conducted a poetry-writing clinic for over 100 middle school students.

5. Dr. Marina Dodigovic presented at the Qatar TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language) conference in Doha, April 11-12. Her paper discussed several on-line tools that can be used to support vocabulary learning in ESL settings. She also described activities in which the tools can be used, in light of the current vocabulary learning theories.

6. Dr. Krystyna Golkowska, senior lecturer in English, gave a presentation entitled: "The role of affect in developing communicative and intercultural competence" at the Qatar TESOL Conference. She went on to present "English for specific purposes: Theory into practice" at the International Conference on Education, Taipei, Taiwan, April 26-27.

Outreach activities

1. WCMC-Q reaches out to high school students

In a series of ongoing activities, WCMC-Q faculty and staff from the Office of Admissions and Student Affairs are getting the message across to high school students in Qatar that medicine and biomedical research offer a wealth of attractive career options.

i. Launched in April, the **first Annual High School Essay Contest** gives young people an opportunity to consider and write about what it is like to be a doctor in Qatar and the issues that might affect doctors. Two lucky winners will be awarded a fully-funded two-week trip to Weill Cornell Medical College in New York, where, under the sponsorship of **Dr. Ronald G. Crystal**, professor and Chairman of Genetic Medicine at WCMC, they will visit the research labs and meet distinguished physicians.

For more, visit:

<http://qatar-med.cornell.edu/> and click on the link for "High School Students Essay Competition"

ii. Also in April, Foundation Program faculty members welcomed 16 eleventh graders and their teachers from Omar Bin Al Khattab School for Boys to a presentation on research.

Dr. Imad Makki began by outlining the significant level of funding available in Qatar for research activities by students at different stages of education. He explained the research process and challenged the students to think outside the box in identifying areas they might work on.

Lecturer in biology, **Dr. Renee Richer**, went on to give a wide-ranging presentation. She identified numerous areas for groundbreaking research in Qatar, and encouraged her audience to join the effort, go out into the field to collect data - and share their knowledge by publishing their findings.

The response was enthusiastic. There were several ideas for projects in Qatar, from studying the (possible) link between internet use and depression, to research into the marine environment. "It was like a light switching on in my head!" said one participant.

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Michael Vertigans
Director
Phone: +974 492 8650
Fax: +974 492 8444
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iii. Professor of physics, **Dr. Roger Hinrichs**, and associate teaching professor of chemistry at Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, Dr. Garry Warnock, gave a science show centered on the theme of atoms at Omar Bin Al Khattab School, April 16. The 90-minute session, in front of an audience of about 80 boys and science teachers at secondary level, included demonstrations featuring gases, electricity and lasers and illustrated basic principles in chemistry and physics. “My message was that good science is important for society, and it’s based on observation and demonstration. Hopefully, this will cause some of the students to become more interested in science,” said Dr. Hinrichs.

2. Faculty, students volunteer at Medical Camp

Over 30 WCMC-Q students and three faculty members stepped up to join a day-long medical camp providing health education and care for low-income workers, April 25. Organized by the Indian Medical Association Qatar Chapter and the Indian Islamic Association Qatar, the camp offered free health checks, with the focus this year on diabetes and hypertension; counseling; health education; and nutrition advice, to workers with a monthly income of less than QR1,500 (about \$400).

An estimated 4,000 people attended the event, which was supported by the National Health Authority, Hamad Medical Corporation, Qatar Diabetes Association, private clinics and schools.

WCMC-Q professor of pediatrics, **Dr. Marcellina Mian** said she was seeing diabetic patients in the age range 36 to over 60 years; many also had hypertension. “The ones that have the condition under good control only need a little counseling, but I have also referred some for more complete evaluations.”

Second year pre-med **Utsav Nandi** assisted her by checking blood pressure and pulse, and interpreting for the many patients who spoke only Hindi, or Malayalam and a little Hindi. “I’ve been to Hamad Hospital for observerships, but actually *taking* the pulse – something so simple – seems wonderful. This is one of the reasons why we entered the profession,” he said.

Forthcoming events

For the first time, WCMC-Q is offering a varied program of educational activities over the summer for students from within and outside the Medical College. Coming up:

- i. Two courses for Education City students, delivered by visiting faculty from Cornell University’s main campus. The courses are: Fundamentals of Music delivered by lecturer in music, **Dr. Bethany Jean Malone** (18 May to 19 June); and Contemporary Moral Issues, by **Dr. Erin Taylor**, instructor in philosophy (18 May to 26 June).
- ii. MCAT preparatory course, 18 May to 12 June, delivered for the first time by WCMC-Q pre-medical faculty – for students applying to the Medical Program next year.
- iii. Post-Foundation Program, a follow-up for students who completed the Foundation Program, running from 18 May to 12 June. Designed to strengthen further the students’ skills in the basic sciences, math and English, it will also prepare them for a six-week period enrolled in Cornell’s Summer College in Ithaca, from late June.

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Director
Phone: +974 492 8650
Fax: +974 492 8444
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iv. Activities for school students. This year, WCMC-Q will offer both Q-SMARTS and Q-Future Doctors Programs with the aim of encouraging middle and high school students to consider careers in medicine and biomedical research. Each program runs for a week, starting late June/early July. **Dr. Jehan Al Rayahi '08** and **Dr. Osama Alsaied '08** are leading the high school student program.

In addition, WCMC-Q will offer a pre-college enrichment program in July for high school students.

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