



BULLETIN

October 1, 2007

Record number of students enroll in WCMC-Q's programs

The number of students enrolling in the Pre-medical and Medical Programs this year has hit an all-time high.

30 students enrolled in the medical Class of 2011. Of these, 28 students successfully completed the Pre-medical Program and two are external students. The Class celebrated their entry to the Medical Program at the White Coat Ceremony, September 10. Professor of pediatrics at WCMC-Q, Dr. Marcellina Mian, was the keynote speaker.

61 freshmen joined the first year of the two-year Pre-medical Program - the maximum number the Medical College can admit. Among them is the youngest student ever admitted to WCMC-Q, 14-year old Iqbal El Assaad from Lebanon.

New this year is a year-long Foundation Program. 18 students have joined the program, which is designed to nurture their abilities to better prepare them for the Pre-medical Program. It follows the success of a pilot project run in the spring semester. Covering the basic sciences, mathematics and English writing, with an emphasis on critical thinking and problem solving, it gives foundation students opportunities to build on their skills and thereby enhance their chances of success in the Pre-medical Program.

Forthcoming events: From early October, WCMC-Q faculty members, and admissions and public affairs staff will travel region-wide as part of Qatar Foundation's *Discover Education City* roadshow. The aim is to inform an audience in Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Abu Dhabi and Dubai about the opportunities to study at campuses of stellar U.S. universities in Qatar - Weill Cornell, Carnegie Mellon, Georgetown, Texas A&M and Virginia Commonwealth.

Researchers go places

Over the summer period, WCMC-Q medical students took part in summer research at Cornell University in Ithaca and Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City.

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Owing to the success of the summer student research fellowships scheme, which began in 2004, the number of funded placements was increased this year from twelve to sixteen. The fellowships are awarded by competition.

Members of the Class of 2010 and the incoming Class of 2011 worked with some of the University's top researchers, in areas including physiology, genetics and virology.

In 2007-2008 Muhamed Baljevic, Class of 2009, is the first medical student from WCMC-Q to take a year out of the Medical Program to pursue a research project. Baljevic is working in the Ansary Center for Stem Cell Therapeutics, as part of the team headed by Dr. Shahin Rafii, Arthur B. Belfer Professor in Genetic Medicine at Weill Cornell Medical College in the U.S.

In the second round of Qatar National Research Fund's Undergraduate Research Experience Program (UREP) awards, some 25 WCMC-Q students and 15 faculty mentors received funding for research projects in Qatar. Areas of investigation include social attitudes to patients with schizophrenia, organ donation in Qatar and an epidemiological/histological study of colon disease, among others. Five of the ten projects are collaborative investigations with Hamad Medical Corporation or Qatar University.

Forthcoming event: Selected students will present their projects at WCMC-Q's Annual Medical Student Research Forum, October 23.

Faculty news

Dr. Ahmad Teebi: Paper published in *Nature Genetics*

Professor of pediatrics and of genetics at WCMC-Q, Dr. Ahmad Teebi, is part of an international team reporting in the August edition of *Nature Genetics* that mutations in LRP2 cause Donnai-Barrow syndrome (DBS) and facio-oculo-acoustico-renal (FOAR) syndrome.

DBS is associated with a spectrum of congenital malformations, including facial dysmorphism (abnormal development of tissue), an area in which Dr. Teebi is an expert.

The group's study of a number of families resulted in mapping of the disorder to chromosome 2q23.3-31.1, identifying LRP2 mutations in six families with DBS, and one family with FOAR.

Significance of the findings: LRP2 encodes megalin, a multigland uptake receptor whose role is to regulate the levels of a number of circulating compounds. The presence of megalin is critical for normal embryonic

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development, e.g. of the diaphragm, lungs and brain. The research points the way for possible future pharmacological therapies that target the megalin pathway.

Mutations in LRP2, which encodes the multiligand receptor megalin, cause Donnai-Barrow and facio-oculo-acoustico-renal syndromes: Nature Genetics, Volume 39 number 8, August 2007.

<http://www.nature.com/ng/journal/v39/n8/abs/ng2063.html;jsessionid=80D2FDF5A2D330DE5C1DEFC316D6E9FE>

Dr. Bruce Davidson: Papers published in *New England Journal of Medicine*

In studies published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* in September, an international team (The van Gogh Investigators) including WCMC-Q professor of medicine, Dr. Bruce Davidson, report that phase III clinical trials of the anti-clotting drug Idraparinux in patients with deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism were disappointing and revealed hidden dangers for some patients.

Early, small-scale trials suggested that Idraparinux was a safe and effective alternative to current treatments such as heparin

In these latest trials among groups of patients with a prior history of DVT (clotting in the legs) Idraparinux was found to reduce rates of recurrent clotting. However, it was less effective in patients with pulmonary embolism (clotting in the lungs) and led to a significantly higher risk of dangerous bleeding. Even given once weekly, the drug also accumulated in patients.

Significance of the findings: DVT is not the same clinical entity as pulmonary embolism, and the approach to prevention or treatment of the conditions should be different. Since early trials had seemed promising, the research underlines the importance of conducting randomized phase III trials. "Without these large, comparative studies we simply would not catch many of the risks before a drug made its way to patients," said Dr. Davidson, who is also Senior Associate Dean for Clinical Affairs at WCMC-Q.

Extended Prophylaxis of Deep Venous Thrombosis or Pulmonary Embolism with Idraparinux; and Evaluation of once weekly subcutaneous idraparinux with heparin and vitamin K antagonists in the treatment of deep vein thrombosis or pulmonary embolism: New England Journal of Medicine 357, September 13, 2007.

<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/357/11/1094>

<http://content.nejm.org/cgi/content/full/357/11/1105>

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Dr. Maya Hammoud reappointed Chair of Undergraduate Medical Education Committee of Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics (APGO) in the U.S.

Associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at WCMC-Q, Dr. Maya Hammoud has been asked to serve for a second two-year term as Chair of the APGO Undergraduate Medical Education Committee.

A member of the committee for six years, and Chair since 2005, Dr. Hammoud has made a significant contribution to its work. This has included chairing a task force to develop an electronic system of testing (*uWise*), now widely used in medical schools; producing new teaching cases, with materials available online; developing a clinical skills curriculum, with best practices on a range of topics; and preparing pamphlets for preceptors as part of the Community-Based Scholars Program.

Dr. Hammoud, who is also Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs, was commended for her "excellent leadership and performance" as Chair of the committee by APGO President, Dr. Susan M. Cox.

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Photographs are available. For further information or photographs, please use the contacts below.

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