



BULLETIN

October 2008

Events/Happenings

Dean of WCMC-Q Announces His Retirement

Dr. Daniel R. Alonso, Dean of WCMC-Q since its inception in 2001, has announced his retirement, and therefore his resignation from the post, effective January 1, 2009.

Dr. Alonso's eight years at the helm witnessed the birth of WCMC-Q and its growth from a fledgling organization housed in temporary facilities, to a fully functioning Medical College in a state-of-the-art building. His tenure has seen the college through its first complete educational cycle, culminating in the May 2008 graduation of the historic inaugural class.

Under Dean Alonso's guidance, the Medical College has formed partnerships with Hamad Medical Corporation, the National Health Authority and other local entities, providing strong links between the college, the medical community and opinion formers across Qatar. The groundwork is laid for a world-class biomedical research program with a five-year plan of development firmly in place. WCMC-Q is also playing an important role in the planning of the Sidra Medical and Research Center, the teaching hospital scheduled to open in 2011.

To continue future progress, Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Deputy Dean of WCMC-Q, will take over as Interim Dean at the time of Dr. Alonso's departure in January. Dr. Alonso will be appointed Dean Emeritus and continue to serve the Medical College in an advisory role to help with the transition.

Dr. Alonso joined the faculty of Cornell University Medical College in 1969, and became a full Professor in 1984. In 1982 he was appointed Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs and later served as Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. In that role, he directed a major curricular reform that was implemented in the fall of 1996, a date coinciding with the opening of the Weill Education Center, a new teaching facility designed under his supervision. He currently serves WCMC-Q as both Dean and Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine.

A committee to conduct an international search for a new Dean will be appointed in the near future by Dr. Antonio Gotto, Dean of Weill Cornell Medical College and Provost for Medical Affairs of Cornell University.

First WCMC-Q Graduate Addresses Class of 2012

WCMC-Q inducted the Class of 2012 into the medical world during the annual White Coat Ceremony on September 9, and for the first time a graduate of the Medical College addressed the incoming class.

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Dr. Jehan Al-Rayahi of the inaugural class of 2008 delivered the evening's keynote speech. Her presence served as a poignant reminder of the growing history of the Medical College.

The evening was attended by a capacity audience of faculty - including WCMC-Q faculty at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) - staff, family, friends and guests. Dr Maya Hammoud, Senior Associate Dean for Education, opened proceedings by reminding the 27 new medical students that the ceremony was intended to "impress upon you the importance of dedicating yourself to upholding the principles of this profession from the first day of your training".

Dr. Al-Rayahi was born and raised in Qatar and, in her short time since graduating in May, has continued to be a vital and active member of the WCMC-Q community by developing and serving as Co-Director for three of the Medical College's summer programs. She is currently pursuing her goal to become an academic and a radiologist at WCMC-Q partner HMC.

As this year's White Coat Ceremony took place during the holy month of Ramadan, the event was followed by an Iftar dinner where the students and their families shared the traditional breaking of the daily fast with the faculty and deans of the Medical College. The ceremony and Iftar mark the start of a three-day orientation for the new students.

Faculty News

Laith J. Aburaddad, PhD, has been appointed Visiting Professor of Physics and Visiting Professor of Public Health. Dr. Aburaddad received his PhD in physics from Florida State University. He has held positions as a NSF-JSPS Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Research Center for Nuclear Physics in Osaka, Japan and as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Department of Infectious Disease Epidemiology, Faculty of Medicine of Imperial College London. He has also served as a Research Scientist at the Statistical Center for HIV/AIDS Research and Prevention, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle, Washington where he most recently was appointed Assistant Professor in the Program in Biostatistics and Biomathematics, Vaccine and Infectious Disease Institute.

Dr. Abu-Raddad's research interests are multidisciplinary and focus on infectious diseases with strong support from his analytical and computational expertise. He anticipates shifting the emphasis of his research to problems related to the infectious and non-infectious disease burdens in the Middle East. His research has been funded by organizations such as the NIH and NSF, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Department of Energy and others within the United States. Since 2007 he has served as a consultant, member, advisory member and lead author for a number of projects related to HIV/AIDS for organizations such as the World Bank, WHO, UNAIDS, and the Washington State Department of Health.

Arash Rafii Tabrizi, MD, PhD, has been appointed Assistant Professor of Genetic Medicine and Assistant Professor of Genetic Medicine in Obstetrics/Gynecology. Dr. Rafii received an MD from the Université Paris V René Descartes and a PhD in Molecular Oncology from the Université Paris XI,

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Kremelin Bicetre. He was a resident in Gynecology-Obstetrics at the Assistance Public-Hopitaux de Paris, and a Fellow in Gynecologic Oncology at the Institut Claudius Regaud, Toulouse. Dr. Arash has also held the positions of Research Fellow at Washington University, St. Louis, Assistant Professor at the Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse, and Junior Faculty member at INSERM, U872, Paris. He was attending physician in Gynecologic Oncology at the Institut Claudius Regaud, Toulouse, France in 2007-2008.

Dr. Rafii's research focus is on stem cell science and gynecologic oncology. At WCMC-Q he envisions the implementation of a stem cell oncologic research program, and the development of a stem cell laboratory in Doha that will collaborate with the WCMC Department of Genetic Medicine as well as the Ansary Stem Cell Center for Regenerative Medicine. He anticipates continuing collaboration with his previous laboratory in France, at INSERM, and with a network of cancer centers focused on ovarian cancer including Institut Claudius Regaud, Institut Gustave Roussy and Centre Oscar Lambret.

Basim Uthman, MD, has been appointed Professor of Neurology. Dr. Uthman has been a Department of Neurology faculty member at the University of Florida in Gainesville since 1987, and in the school's Department of Neuroscience since 1996. He has taught medical and graduate courses in neurology, epilepsy and electroencephalography.

Dr. Uthman's current research interests include clinical studies in the treatment of epilepsy, pharmacokinetics of antiepileptic drugs, seizures in the elderly and neurostimulation for treatment of epilepsy. He has served on a number of committees and boards, ranging from 12-year service on the Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee at the VA Medical Center in Gainesville, to his more recent service on the Research and Development Committee in the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System.

Forthcoming events

WCMC-Q Faculty Present at Diabetes in Children and Adolescent conference

The Qatar Diabetes Association, in collaboration with the Detroit Medical Center, Children Hospital and the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) will host an International conference on "Diabetes in Children and Adolescent" on October 10-12, 2008 at the Sheraton Doha Hotel.

Two WCMC-Q faculty members will be presenting at the event. Dr. Sandip Kapur, Associate Professor of Surgery at WCMC-Q and Chief of Transplant Surgery at New York Presbyterian Hospital will give a presentation on "Pancreas/Beta-Cell Transplantation" on October 11. Then on October 12, Dr. Gregory F. Dakin, Assistant Professor of Surgery at WCMC-Q will present on Bariatric Surgery.

5th Annual Student Research Forum

Medical program students will present the fruits of their summer research projects at the fifth annual Medical Student Research Forum, October 21.

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A series of oral presentations will be followed by a poster session where the first and second year students will field questions from faculty, fellow students and guests. Prizes are awarded to the top presenters.

Most of the placements were funded by eight-week summer research fellowships awarded by competition. The majority of the students were assigned to leading research teams in the labs of Cornell University and Weill Cornell Medical College in the U.S.

Dr. Ahmad Teebi Presents At International Genetics Conference

Dr. Ahmad Teebi, Professor of Pediatrics and of Genetic Medicine at WCMC-Q, and Vice Chair of Pediatrics at WCMC, will present “Rediscovering Genetics in Qatar: Founder Effect and Genetic Drift” at the 2nd Al Ain International Genetics Conference, October 28-30, 2008.

“Genetic drift” refers to the random fluctuation of gene frequencies in small populations, a topic highly relevant to the current population in Qatar.

The presentation will be done in collaboration with Tawfeg Ben-Omran, Noora Shahbek and Mariam Al-Mureikhi from the Section of Clinical and Metabolic Genetics Department of Paediatrics from WCMC-Q’s partner, Hamad Medical Corporation of Doha, Qatar.

The 2nd Al-Ain International Genetics Conference is organized by the Genetics and Development Research Priority Group, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, UAE University and will take place in Al-Ain city, United Arab Emirates. More information can be found at www.genetics2008.uaeu.ac.ae.

WCMC and WCMC-Q Luminaries Participate in the 2008 BioQatar Conference

Notable representatives from both WCMC and WCMC-Q will take part in BioQatar 2008, a joint conference hosted by Qatar Science and Technology Park and Qatar Foundation Research Division. The conference, with the theme “Translating Clinical Research into Business Ventures”, is aimed at promoting technology-based biomedical ventures in Qatar, and will take place on November - 17-18 at the Al Sharq Village & Spa.

Dr. Daniel Alonso, Dean of WCMC-Q, will serve on a panel entitled “Institutional Perspectives”. Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Vice Dean for Research, Weill-Cornell MC Qatar will moderate a panel on Biotechnology in Translational and Clinical Research for Treating Cancer.

Professor Ronald Crystal, Chairman, Genetic Medicine Department, Weill Cornell Medical College and Director of The Arthur and Rochelle Belfer Gene Therapy Core Facility will serve on two panels at the conference. The first is *Business Development and Biosciences Ventures*, and the second is entitled “*What does it take to establish a Medical Biotechnology Company in Qatar? What are the Challenges and Opportunities?*”

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