



Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar



PRESS RELEASE

Thriving student research promises future expertise for Qatar

Doha, October 23, 2007. Biomedical research conducted by some of WCMC-Q's top medical students is in the spotlight today at the fourth annual Medical Student Research Forum.

The students will describe leading edge investigations into conditions such as diabetes, asthma, cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer's disease, in a series of oral and poster presentations.

There will be an exciting peek into a future of personalized therapies, when drug regimens may be designed to treat diseases in patient groups according to their genetic make-up.

The research was carried out by some twenty students, who were awarded summer research fellowships by the Medical College. The number of participants increased this year following the success of previous fellowships, and in response to growing interest in research among the students.

They spent up to ten weeks in the labs of Cornell University's main campus in Ithaca and of Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City, working with teams of investigators guided by some of the university's most innovative researchers.

Students working in Ithaca had just completed WCMC-Q's Pre-medical Program, while those who traveled to New York moved on to the second year of the Medical Program this fall.

Dean of the Medical College, Dr. Daniel R. Alonso, said: "WCMC-Q is committed to playing a significant role in contributing to the vision of transforming Qatar into a knowledge-based economy, and a regional center of excellence in science and technology.

"Our summer research fellowship program aims to focus on areas of research that will benefit the population of Qatar, using the latest biomedical technology and knowledge."

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Today's Forum includes two collaborative investigations between Weill Cornell in New York and in Qatar, and Hamad Medical Corporation. A third study examines the development of asthma among groups of Qataris and Tunisians.

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, Vice Dean for Research, said experience of research is a key component of the medical students' education.

"WCMC-Q aims to create a culture of excellence in research. The summer fellowships enable selected students to go to the U.S. and learn the research methodology that complements their intuitive clinical skills.

"This will make them better clinicians and better scientists in the future. It may influence their career decisions by demonstrating the benefits of combining patient care with research.

"In time, it should also lead to the development in Qatar of improved treatments for a range of illnesses," Dr. Sheikh noted.

Qatari student Noora Al Shahwani (Class of 2011), who worked in a neurobiology lab at Cornell University, said: "I gained a lot of experience in a field related to neurosurgery, the area I hope to specialize in after I graduate.

"I enjoyed it very much. It was different from studying, more like being at work. You spend the day in the lab, give of yourself 100 percent, and then you leave."

Mohamed El Shazly (Class of 2010) was assigned to a genetic medicine lab at Weill Cornell in New York. He emerged with a deeper understanding of how everyday management of people at risk of developing type 2 diabetes, a disease that affects about 15 percent of the population in Qatar, could be planned according to their genetic make-up.

"If we know what a person's genotype is like, and if he is more susceptible to developing diabetes, then we can intervene earlier to manage the condition, through lifestyle changes."

Established in 2004, the summer research fellowships are part of WCMC-Q's thriving program of student research, which now has an international dimension.

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In May, Zeinab Ammous (Class of 2009) was the first WCMC-Q medical student to present a poster at an international meeting, the annual conference of the American Thoracic Society, held in San Francisco. Meanwhile, Subhi Al Aref (Class of 2008) has won an award for his research and published a number of papers.

In addition, an increasing number of students and faculty are taking part in projects supported by Qatar National Research Fund through the Undergraduate Research Experience Program (UREP). They include students from every class in WCMC-Q's six-year program.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Established in partnership with Qatar Foundation, WCMC-Q is part of the Weill Medical College of Cornell University, the first American institution to offer its M.D. degree overseas. WCMC-Q offers a complete and integrated educational program, comprising the two-year Pre-medical Program, followed by the four-year Medical Program, with teaching by Cornell faculty. There are separate admission processes for each Program, guided by the standards of admission in use at Cornell University in Ithaca, and its Medical College in New York City.

Website: www.qatar-med.cornell.edu

About Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development

Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, and chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al Missned, Qatar Foundation is a private, non-profit organization committed to the principle that a nation's greatest natural resource is its people.

The headquarters of Qatar Foundation are located within its flagship project, Education City, a fourteen million square-meter campus which hosts numerous progressive learning institutions and centers of research, including branch campuses of five of the world's leading universities, plus a cutting-edge research and development center. Qatar Foundation also works to enhance the quality of life in Qatar by investing in community health and development.

For more information please visit: <http://www.qf.org.qa/>

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