



Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar



DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

Qatar home to world-class biomedical research program

Doha, 11 June 2008 – Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development and Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q), today unveiled a major initiative to establish a world-class biomedical research program, the first of its kind in the Middle East.

The program aims to form a bio-medical research infrastructure, developing a scientific and technical workforce for the benefit of the region at large. Central to this endeavor is a partnership approach, bringing together institutions that have overlapping missions in medical education, research and healthcare.

The program will also support high quality research in the fields of genetic and molecular medicine, women's and children's health, gene therapy, stem cells, and vaccine development.

Specific objectives include:

- Development of first rate, translational and clinical research projects that establish Qatar as a center of excellence with a focus on improving the health of the population.
- Development of the bio-medical research infrastructure to include laboratories, compliance and regulatory functions.
- Creation of a critical mass of research faculty in Qatar and developing a regional scientific and technical workforce.
- To draw on the strengths of existing and future organizations in the Qatar healthcare sector such as Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Sidra Medical and Research Center.
- To create a conduit for commercialization of discoveries through the Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP)

In five years, approximately 120 people will be engaged in the program, establishing a critical mass which will give Qatar a sustainable scientific research community. These include principal investigators, post doctorates, technicians, admin staff for shared use core facilities, clinical and translational investigators and clinical research support staff.

Vice President for Research at Qatar Foundation Dr. Abdelali Haoudi said:" Following on from the recent announcement by the Qatar National Research Fund, of \$45 million in research funding, I am delighted to participate in the official launch of this bio-medical research initiative. Qatar Foundation's aim is to establish Qatar as one of world's leading research and intellectual centers through partnering with international and

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regional organizations as required and through being a key partner in the drive towards a Knowledge Based Economy. This is one major strand of that overall strategy and bio-medical research will play a vital role in the development of the country's research capability. To underline the importance of research to Qatar, 2.8% of the GDP has been allocated for research programs, which position Qatar among the top ten countries worldwide with the highest GDP contribution to support Research and Development"

Dean of WCMC-Q Dr Daniel R. Alonso said:"This is a significant investment in biomedical research which forms the second leg of our triple mission of education, research and clinical care. Following on from the graduation of the first doctors to be trained in this country last month we are now embarking on a long term plan which will play a key role in building biomedical research capacity and knowledge for the first time."

"We will be working closely with our partners such as Qatar Foundation, Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), the National Health Authority (NHA), Sidra Medical and Research Center, Qatar Science and Technology Park (QSTP) and our colleagues in our parent campus at WCMC in New York. Eminent researchers and faculty there will be playing major roles in establishing this program."

Dr Javaid Sheikh, Deputy Dean for the Medical School and Vice Dean for Research at WCMC-Q said: "We have already embarked on two proof of concept research projects. The first one compares variations in gene expression levels in the airways of smokers and non-smokers, whereas the second one assesses the clinical care of diabetes and cardiovascular illnesses in Qatar. In addition, we have initiated the process of developing core capabilities in our research laboratories, including the genomics and proteomics cores, computational biology and biostatistics core, a vivarium, a microscopy core, and a basic laboratory support core.

"The start up of this major program in Doha now takes bio-medical research to new levels. As we initiate this world-class research program, our focus would be on developing sustainable local research capacity while targeting the disease areas important in the Gulf region, namely diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. We have established two broad research themes: a Genetic & Molecular Medicine research program with a focus on personalized medicine, gene therapy for cancer, and stem cell research; and a Women & Children's Health research program with a focus on maternal fetal medicine and the neurogenetic disorders of the newborn. I am particularly excited to be part of such a strong commitment to the future of the country as it aspires to become a Center of Excellence for Research in the region."

WCMC-Q is a leading player in the development of the healthcare sector in Qatar. As the first American medical college graduating doctors outside of the United States, the college brings an illustrious tradition of medical teaching to Qatar. This tradition is inspiring the next generation of doctors in the country, preparing them to be physicians, biomedical researchers and medical educators at the forefront of their fields.

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About Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar

Established by Cornell University in partnership with Qatar Foundation, WCMC-Q is part of Weill Cornell Medical College. A member of the Ivy League, Cornell is the first American university 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 is a separate admissions process 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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