



PRESS RELEASE

WCMC-Q Symposium Focuses on the Changing Face of Health Care in Qatar

Doha, Feb. 24, 2010 – Mortality rates have declined and people are living longer, many with chronic diseases. These changing demographics, which have profound consequences for health care and its delivery, were among the topics covered Tuesday at a continuing medical education symposium co-sponsored by Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar and Hamad Medical Corporation.

“As a global partnership between Qatar Foundation and Cornell University, WCMC-Q plays an important role addressing health problems that transcend national boundaries,” said Javaid Sheikh, MD, dean of WCMC-Q, during the symposium. “Our medical college provides students with the global perspective they need to address emerging health issues throughout their professional careers,” he said.

“This symposium is most timely in an era when all businesses have gone global and when education and health care - which are always in demand regardless of the economic environment - have come of age and are rapidly going global as well,” said Ms. Havva Idriss, vice dean of WCMC-Q, during her opening remarks for the symposium.

Changing Priorities for Physicians and Patients

“Health care is evolving and the priorities of both patients and physicians are changing,” said Ravinder Mamtani, MD, associate dean for global and public health at WCMC-Q, chairman of the CME symposium committee. “People are turning to traditional and alternative healing therapies. Periodic screening tests for many diseases are gaining widespread acceptance. People are even travelling around the world for health care. These factors will affect the way health care is delivered and the way health care professionals are trained,” says Mamtani. “Continuing medical education symposia, such as this one, help us share information about educational opportunities for medical students and other trainees and help us improve the health care we provide in Qatar.”

“This symposium is a great opportunity for an exchange of information between experts from the US, Cornell University, Hamad Medical Corporation, the Supreme Council on Health, and Aspetar,” said Sheik Mohammed H. Al-Thani, director of Public Health for the Supreme Council of Health, who spoke about the emerging face of health care worldwide and its challenges at the symposium. “The focus and content of the symposium are a reflection of Cornell's commitment to the State of Qatar and improving the quality of its medical education and health care.”

The accreditation and reaccreditation of its hospitals in 2006 and 2009 by Joint Commission International is evidence of the tremendous focus on improvement of clinical care and training at Hamad Medical Corporation, said Dr. Abdulatif Al-Khal, director of the Medical Education Department. “The decision by HMC to seek full accreditation by the US Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education for its residency programs is intended to improve the learning environment for all medical students and residents,” he said. “Not only will our residency training programs match the quality of those in the US, it will improve the safety and quality of care provided to all our patients,” said Dr. Al-Khal.

Plans and projects underway to implement the health care goals and outcomes outlined in the Qatar National Vision 2030 were discussed by Dr. Faleh Mohamed Hussain Ali, MD, Assistant Secretary General for Policy Affairs for the Supreme Council of Health. “We are increasing our focus on primary care to become more wellness oriented,” said Dr. Ali. “We would like our health centers to be places where people go, not just because they are sick, but also to obtain preventive care so they can stay healthy.” He discussed tools being used by the Supreme Council of Health, such as development of national health plans, the use of performance contracts, and public/private partnerships, among others, to achieve the goals and outcomes of the vision statement.

The difference between health care and medical education systems in France and the United States was discussed by Jerome Yesavage, MD, director of an exchange program between medical schools at the University of Nice and Stanford University. “The French and US systems are quite different,” he said during his presentation. In France, the same first-year curriculum is offered to all students who wish to pursue medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, midwifery and physiotherapy, he said. Flexibility in training is available after the initial year for those who don't go into medical school. “That flexibility may be suitable for a state-directed health system like Qatar's that needs to train all health professionals in a coordinated fashion,” he said.

25 % of US Physicians are International Medical Graduates

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Currently, 25 percent of all physicians licensed to practice in the United States are international medical graduates, according to Stephen S. Seeling, vice president for operations of the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates in Philadelphia, who participated in the symposium. International medical graduates make up 27 percent of physicians in US residency programs, and of the 4,731 international medical graduates in US residency programs in 2009, 38 percent were in internal medicine, 19 percent in family medicine, 9 percent in pediatrics and 5 percent in psychiatry programs. He also discussed prerequisites and certification requirements for international medical graduates who want to train in the US.

Albert Lowenfels, MD, professor of surgery and professor of family and community medicine at New York Medical College, emphasized the importance of lifestyle factors in improving health and life expectancy. "During the past several decades, we have recognized the importance of lifestyle factors such as smoking, obesity, alcohol, diet, and exercise in maintaining and enjoying good health," he said. "Prevention of illness by following recognized healthy lifestyle guidelines benefits society because preventing disease is considerably less costly than treating illness resulting from improper health habits."

Khaled Machaca, PhD, associate dean for research at WCMC-Q, discussed the growing opportunities for advanced biomedical research in Qatar. "The research studies underway here are focused on the diseases prevalent in the area will ultimately improve the health of the people of Doha and the Gulf Region."

Ends

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 an innovative educational program comprised of a 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

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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. Website: www.qf.org.qa

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)

Hamad Medical Corporation is the premier non-profit health care provider in Doha, Qatar. It was established by Emiri decree in 1979 and manages five highly specialized hospitals, namely, Hamad General Hospital, Rumailah Hospital, Women's Hospital, Al Amal Hospital and Al Khor Hospital. Since its establishment, HMC has rapidly developed medical facilities capable of providing state-of-the-art diagnosis and treatment of diseases that previously could only be managed in overseas medical centers.

The Corporation has recently achieved the accreditation of the Joint Commission International (JCI), which certified that the health care services secured by the Corporation are on equal footing to those provided by world-class prominent hospitals.

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