



PRESS RELEASE

A Little Prevention Could Help You See Clearer, Longer

Doha, June 25, 2009 – Yesterday, guests gathered at the Community and Recreation Building in Education City to learn more about a sense that is highly valued but often taken for granted.

“Eye health is often neglected—people don’t think of it until something goes wrong, and from there it becomes a battle to see properly,” said Dr. Mohamud Verjee, assistant professor of medicine at WCMC-Q and medicine consultant at Hamad Medical Corporation.

In the hour-long presentation in which he used a large eye model to explain the parts of the eye, Dr. Verjee explored potential threats to clear vision and ways to foresee and avoid them. As a basic health measure, he emphasized yearly eye exams for anyone between the ages of two and 18, even if the person can see perfectly.

With regular eye checkups, problems like infections, amblyopia (lazy eye) and astigmatisms—when vertical and horizontal focal points fail to line up—can be detected early and treated to avoid problems in the future. After the age of 18, Dr. Verjee said, a person only needs a check-up once every two years, especially if a person is nearsighted or farsighted.

As adults, factors like intense sunlight, sandy air, occupational hazards, and an imbalanced diet can pose threats to vision, Dr. Verjee explained. Wearing protective eye gear—quality sunglasses in the sun, and safety goggles at work or when playing certain sports—is an important preventative measure. Studies reveal mixed results about whether or not sun exposure can degrade vision over time, Dr. Verjee said.

“But if there is any chance that the sun can do long-term damage, it’s better to take the precaution than suffer a partial loss of vision.”

Eating a balanced diet is critical to maintaining good vision, Dr. Verjee said. In particular, he said, fat-soluble vitamins—A, D, K and E—nourish the tissues of the brain

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and eyes. Foods that contain these vitamins include carrots, sunflower seeds, almonds, spinach, milk and red cabbage and blueberries among others.

Dr. Verjee said that after the age of 40, glaucoma—disease that damages the nerve that serves the eye—becomes more of a threat to eye health. Glaucoma is generally under-diagnosed, he said, and it's important for people to be aware of a possible family history of the condition.

While many people visit an optician for prescription lenses, it is also recommended that they go to an ophthalmologist for glaucoma screenings and eye checkups. In addition, Dr. Verjee said that a family doctor should always be concerned about eye health.

“If you take your child to your family doctor and they don't look at the eyes, ask them to do it,” he said.

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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.

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The headquarters of Qatar Foundation are located within its flagship project, Education City, a fourteen million square-meter campus which hosts numerous progressive

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