



Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar



**October 10, 2009:
A Good Day to Think About the Importance of Mental Health**

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Q: What is World Mental Health Day and What Activities Mark the Day?

A. October 10 is designated by the World Health Organization as a day to promote greater public awareness and understanding of mental health and mental illness around the world. Introduced in 1992 by the World Federation of Mental Health, it is now celebrated in more than 100 countries.

At Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar, we are promoting a range of activities to make our students, faculty and staff aware of the importance of mental health in personal well-being, family relationships and the ability to contribute to society.

As the only medical college in Qatar, WCMC-Q can be instrumental in promoting this year's theme, which is the importance of integrating mental health into primary health care. Our faculty members are discussing with our students ways to incorporate mental health practices into everyday care for patients. We are also showing our students a video on the topic during one of their psychology classes. Information about available resources is available for several hours daily during the week at a kiosk in the Medical College, staffed by people who can provide guidance to those interested in obtaining additional information.

On Sunday, Oct. 11, at 3:30 p.m., WCMC-Q is hosting a seminar on mental and physical health that is open to everyone in Education City. A panel of experts will discuss topics such as depression, stress management, and resilience. Their presentations will be followed by a question and answer period.

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Q: Why Is It Important to Focus on Mental Health?

A: Mental health disorders are prevalent around the world, occurring at all stages of life and in all cultures. The World Health Organization estimates mental disorders are a major source of disability. Depression, in particular, is a leading cause of disability worldwide, second only to cardiovascular disease, according to WHO. Unfortunately, resources for promoting greater awareness, education and treatment of mental disorders are insufficient, especially in developing countries. By focusing attention on mental health, we can help people understand the frequency of these disorders. By educating people worldwide to the treatments and resources available to them, we hope to reduce some of the unnecessary suffering related to mental illness.

Q: Is Treatment Available?

A: During the past decades, extraordinary advances have been made in our ability to treat mental illness. New medications have been developed to successfully treat a variety of conditions, notably, depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and anxiety disorders. Great progress has also been made in psychotherapeutic treatments, particularly cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy. Most research studies indicate that medications and psychotherapy complement each other and often work best when used together. Gradually, we are becoming more successful in spreading the word that mental disorders are diseases of the brain that often can be successfully treated, like many other medical disorders.

Q: Are There Ways to Prevent Mental Illness?

A: Increasingly today, research studies are aimed at identifying genetic risks for mental disorders. Sophisticated imaging techniques also are being used to help identify the differences between sick and healthy brains.

As our ability improves to identify those at risk for mental illnesses, we can begin to target appropriate prevention and treatment strategies. There is some evidence that early recognition of symptoms and early treatment can facilitate recovery.

Q: What would you like to say to people on the occasion of World Mental Health Day?

A: The World Health Organization has estimated that about 450 million people around the world suffer from some form of mental illness. They should not be neglected,

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discriminated against, or left behind. Therefore, it is important to educate people here and around the world about the prevalence of mental disorders, about their signs and symptoms, and about the treatments that are available. Our goal is to reduce unnecessary suffering. World Mental Health Day is an important step in that direction.

The medical information in this article is provided as an information resource only, and is not to be used or relied on for any diagnostic or treatment purposes. This information is not intended to be patient education, does not create any patient-physician relationship, and should not be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis and treatment. If you have or suspect that you have a medical problem or condition, please contact your physician.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Established in partnership with Qatar Foundation, WCMC-Q is part of Weill Cornell Medical College (WCMC) of Cornell University, the first US institution to offer its MD degree overseas. WCMC-Q shares the triple mission of WCMC: a dedication to excellence in education, patient care, and biomedical research.

WCMC-Q offers an innovative program of pre-medical and medical studies leading to the Cornell University MD degree. Teaching is by Cornell and Weill Cornell faculty, including physicians at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) who hold Weill Cornell appointments.

Faculty and staff of WCMC-Q and WCMC are building the research capacity of Qatar in partnership with Qatar Foundation, HMC, the Ministry of Health and other organizations, with a focus on high quality research in genetic and molecular medicine, women's and children's health, gene therapy, and vaccine development.

Website: www.qatar-weill.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.

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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 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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