



PRESS RELEASE

WCMC-Q Introduces Cultural Competence Training To Medical Students and Health Care Professionals in Qatar

Doha, April 28, 2009 – Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar has launched a pioneering training program to help its students and health care professionals improve care by understanding how variations in culture and background can affect health care delivery and outcome.

“Our goal is to help our students, physicians and other health care professionals provide quality care by becoming more aware of the ways culture can affect their interaction with their patients,” says Maha Elnashar, who is directing the Center for Cultural Competence in Health Care at WCMC-Q. “We believe this program, which is the first of its kind in Qatar, is essential here because the diversity among both physicians and patients is so pronounced.” Qatar, despite its small size, has a population as diverse as the United States.

“Over a two-month period, we conducted a random sampling of patients in Hamad Medical Corporation hospitals in cooperation with HMC Medical Education Department. We found patients speaking more than 38 different languages. These patients also have different customs and beliefs related to health care and medical treatments,” says Elnashar. “We believe our students and our physicians should understand the impact these differences may have on the way their patients view medical treatments or therapies.”

For example, for some patients a recommendation to have an operation would have to be discussed by the family. Or a female patient might refuse the services of a male physician. “We want our students and physicians to realize this is a cultural issue; it does not mean the patient doesn’t agree with the physician or doesn’t trust the physician’s judgment,” says Elnashar.

The program helps participants become aware of the differences that exist among people of different cultures. “We help participants understand that it is ok to feel uncomfortable with the differences; but it isn’t ok to simply ignore them or to think that what is

Office of Public Affairs
WCMC-Q
Education City
P.O. Box 24144
Doha, Qatar

Michael Vertigans
Director
Phone: +974 492 8650
Fax: +974 492 8444
Email: miv2008@qatar-med.cornell.edu

Kristina Goodnough
Associate Editor/Writer
Phone: +974 492 8660
Fax: +974 492 8657
Email: krig2007@qatar-med.cornell.edu

effective for one culture can be applied to the other,” says Elnashar. “It reinforced for me the realization that patients of a certain nationality do not necessarily fit a mold, and we should not make assumptions about them,” says fourth year medical student Aalia AlBarwani, who attended the cultural competency workshop.

In 2007, WCMC-Q and HMC established a medical interpretation program to provide medical students with interpretation services during their clinical training. The program was introduced after Elnashar and Huda Abdelrahim, medical interpreter and co-trainer, participated in an intensive training program provided by Cross Cultural Health Care Program, a non-profit organization established to improve access to quality health-care by ethnic communities.

Since then, WCMC-Q has signed an agreement with CCHCP to provide training for health care professionals in both medical Interpretation and cultural competency in Qatar. “We are delighted that we can make the training available to our partners and affiliates in Qatar,” says Elnashar.

“Our goal is to make it easier for health professionals and patients to communicate in a culturally diverse setting,” says Abdelrahim. Building cultural services in the health-care institutions in Qatar serves the country’s diverse population and helps them meet accreditation standards set by the Joint Commission International, the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education and the Liaison Committee on Medical Education.

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 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

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Michael Vertigans
Director
Phone: +974 492 8650
Fax: +974 492 8444
Email: miv2008@qatar-med.cornell.edu

Kristina Goodnough
Associate Editor/Writer
Phone: +974 492 8660
Fax: +974 492 8657
Email: krig2007@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.

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.