



PRESS RELEASE

Healthy Life Expectancy Longer for Men than Women in Qatar

Doha, Sunday, March 8, 2009 – Healthy life expectancy for women in Qatar is about three years shorter than men in Qatar, making it one of the few countries in the world with such a trend, according to the World Health Organization Statistical Information System. The data was highlighted by Dr. Maya Hammoud, senior associate dean for education and associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar during a presentation at Qatar University to commemorate International Women's Day.

Life expectancy for both women and men in Qatar is 77 years and a healthy life expectancy is shorter for women than men (64 years vs. 67), according to the data, said Dr. Hammoud. This makes Qatar one of only eight countries in the WHO survey of 194 countries with such a pattern, as the predominant global trend is for women to live longer than men.

Research into the causes, especially around healthcare for women as they age, would be an area for discussion with all healthcare organizations in the country, and an important area for future research in women's health, she added.

Meanwhile, she noted that Qatar is committed to providing the most advanced and highest quality health care to its people and can point with pride to its high immunization rate and the nearly universal availability of skilled health care for women giving birth.

Babies' survival rate in Qatar is similar to survival rates in the United States, the United Kingdom and France, which is an important indicator of quality. Very few women die in labor and delivery in Qatar compared to other countries because they have access to skilled health care during childbirth, another important indicator of health care quality.

To help ensure that women get the care and screenings they need throughout their lives, Dr. Hammoud shared guidelines developed by the U.S. Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, a government agency charged with improving the quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness of health care for Americans. "The guidelines focus on maintaining or developing a healthy lifestyle and eliminating high risk behaviour," said Dr. Hammoud. "They also provide a timeline for essential screening tests that can help prevent or detect chronic or life threatening diseases."

For example, between the ages 40 to 49 years, women should visit the doctor once a year. They should have their weight and height checked so their body mass index (BMI), an indicator of obesity can be calculated, recorded and discussed. They should also get their blood pressure checked and have a physical examination, including breast and pelvic examinations to screen for breast and genital cancer,

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the two cancers with the highest incidence in Qatar. A mammogram should be performed once every two years until the women turns 50, at which time, it should be done annually. Dr. Hammoud also emphasized the need for all women to take calcium and vitamin D supplements to reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

The appropriate tests and screenings vary for women at different ages, but all women should participate in regular primary care visits to a physician. “A primary care visit is a visit to the doctor when you are healthy, so the doctor can help you stay healthy. During the primary care visit, the doctor can provide the checks, screenings and advice that promote long term health,” said Dr. Hammoud.

“Women can do much to promote their own health and the health of their families. Some of the best steps for long-term health involve abstinence from tobacco, healthy eating and regular exercise, and maintaining a healthy weight.”

For more information on maintaining health, women can visit the website for the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (<http://epss.ahrq.gov/ePSS/index>). Although it is targeted towards women in the U.S., it contains the Electronic Preventive Services Selector (ePSS) a quick hands-on tool to find screening, counseling and preventive medication services appropriate for most patients throughout their life span. Most importantly, Dr. Hammoud added, women should make sure to visit their doctor on a regular basis.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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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.

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