

WCMC-Q and QU LAWC explore crossroads of law and medicine

March, 2015



The seminar attracted many people from both the healthcare and legal sectors in Qatar.

The laws governing the practice of medicine in Qatar were explored at a seminar held at WCMC-Q in collaboration with Qatar University's College of Law (QU-LAWC).

More than 100 attendees from both the medical and legal professions participated in the event, which aimed to establish a dialogue to examine the law as it pertains to physicians, researchers, nurses and other healthcare providers working in Qatar.

The seminar, presented by WCMC-Q's Division of Continuing Professional Development, the Office of Faculty Affairs and the LAWC Dean's Office discussed issues such as the legal protections that exist for patients, the processes followed in medical malpractice cases, and the difficulty of developing a universal understanding of the law in a highly diverse healthcare workforce and patient base, among other topics.

The event, entitled 'Crossroads of Law and Medicine', was opened by an address from LAWC dean Dr. Mohamed Al-Khulaifi, who emphasized the importance of the collaboration between physicians and lawyers to ensure that patients and healthcare providers receive maximum protection under the law.

He said: "Being part of this important dialogue reflects the college's position as Qatar's only college of law and one of the leading law colleges in the region, through the quality of its academic programs, the competencies of its graduates, the expertise of its faculty and the wide-ranging services it provides to the community. Collaboration between the legal and healthcare sectors plays a core role in enhancing current medical malpractice laws in Qatar, and highlights the importance of overcoming ambiguities within the current system. It also emphasizes the role of law in the society as one of the most efficient factors towards building a knowledge-based economy, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. LAWC is well-placed to bring critical discussion to this seminar that will be of invaluable benefit to participants."



The conference also featured a presentation by LAWC professor Dr. Gaber Mahgoub on current medical malpractice laws in Qatar. Dr. Mahgoub described how criminal court, civil court and institutional administrations may participate in addressing patient complaints.

Dr. Ibrahim Janahi, senior consultant and head of pediatric pulmonology at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) shared his unique perspective, both as a practicing physician as well as head of the Supreme Council of Health Qatar Professional Council. Dr. Janahi, who was appointed WCMC-Q

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Janahi, who was appointed WCMC-Q professor of clinical pediatrics in December 2014, becoming the first Qatari to have full professorial rank at the college, spoke about the physician's rights and responsibilities

within the Qatari legal framework as well as the council's proposed changes to Qatari law as it relates to protecting patients and providers. He emphasized that the proposed draft legislation, which will be available for stakeholder comment in the near future, should remove some of the uncertainty and ambiguity that exists within the current system dealing with malpractice.

Dr. Thurayya Arayssi, WCMC-Q associate professor of medicine and associate dean for continuing professional development, highlighted her perspective as an expatriate physician and a faculty member in preparing her students for the practice of medicine in Qatar and beyond. Dr. Arayssi emphasized the importance of communicating and understanding a patient's cultural context in order to practice in the most effective way and to avoid patient-provider misunderstandings.

Additionally, HMC general counsel, Mr. Abdulmajid Basheer Abdulmajid, described how medical malpractice claims are handled at the country's largest healthcare system. He described how patient complaints are directed through a system that includes not only compensating patients for legitimate complaints, but also understanding how systems can be improved to enhance patient safety and prevent injury from occurring in the future.

Sunanda Holmes, WCMC-Q legal counsel, moderated the dialogue between the presenters and the audience on the issues raised in the presentations. Explaining the purpose of the seminar, she said: "Our goal is to begin an ongoing and continuous dialogue between doctors and lawyers about the practice of medicine in Qatar.

"This is an extremely important issue because the majority of healthcare workers in Qatar are from outside the country and they need to have a good understanding of their liabilities, responsibilities and protections under Qatari law in order to provide the best possible standard of healthcare to their patients. It also brings healthcare providers peace of mind to know the legal process if they are ever involved in a malpractice action, for example."

Holmes explained that 69 percent of physicians and 91 percent of nurses practicing in Qatar are expatriates, and that they are drawn from approximately 70 different countries. She noted that, given the complex and intricate nature of law in all countries, plus the language barrier that exists for non-Arabic (and non-English) speakers, legal issues can prove difficult to understand and worrisome for some healthcare workers. Holmes believes that starting a dialogue about these issues will help to dispel some of the concerns.

The event also included a lively discussion session with the audience that comprised legal scholars as well as healthcare practitioners from all sectors of the Qatari healthcare system. It was generally agreed by all participants that the seminar was an important first step in developing future cooperation and dialogue within the legal, regulatory and medical professional communities in relation to protecting the public and the healthcare practitioners through clear and unambiguous laws and medical regulations.

WCMC-Q and QU LAWQ are planning future seminars as well as an international conference on Law and Medicine scheduled for later this year and in 2016.

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