

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

QATAR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO SET UP JOINT RESEARCH LABORATORIES AND PROGRAMMES WITH LEADING JAPANESE INSTITUTE RIKEN
Collaboration Aimed At Advancing Preventive And Personalised Medicine In Hospitals In Both Countries

Doha, Qatar 4 January 2015: Qatar Foundation Research & Development's (QF R&D) Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI), and the Japanese Preventive Medicine & Diagnosis Innovation Program at RIKEN (RIKEN-PMI), have announced plans to establish joint research laboratories and programmes in Qatar and Japan, aimed at advancing preventive and personalised medicine in Qatar.

At a recent meeting in Doha, QBRI signed a letter of intent with RIKEN, one of the world's leading scientific innovators and Japan's largest cutting-edge research institution. The agreement will establish joint programmes to carry out projects with academic researchers and hospitals in both countries.

Through this latest initiative, QBRI is contributing to Qatar Foundation's mission to build Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by improving and transforming healthcare through research in prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases affecting Qatar and the region.

In April last year, Her Highness Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, accompanied by a delegation from Qatar Foundation's Research and Development (QF R&D) – one of the main QF pillars – visited a number of research centres in Japan with the goal of increasing research and development collaboration between the two countries.

During the visit, Qatar Foundation and RIKEN signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a framework enabling the parties to expand scientific exchange in the fields of computing, energy, environment and biomedical research.

The letter of intent signed in Doha is the first major initiative to bear fruit following Her Highness' visit to Japan and marks the first Qatar-Japan research bridge programme in biomedical research and personalised healthcare.

Qatar has taken important steps to develop innovative personalised medicine, and through the partnership with RIKEN, QBRI is furthering Qatar’s capabilities in this field by moving research into practice. Personalised medicine uses very specific genetic information about a person or their disease in order to choose treatment and care that is tailored to individual or personal needs and preferences to ensure they have the best outcome possible.

QBRI is already engaged in basic and applied medical research that supports the translation of novel scientific discoveries into more efficient therapies and better preventative strategies for human diseases, leading to the development of personalised medicine.

RIKEN-PMI will train QBRI scientists and facilitate the transfer of genomics technologies and expertise in transcription network analysis. Researchers will apply these skills to diagnostics and precision medicine to address health issues that prevail among the Qatari population.

The partnership’s first project will focus on breast cancer, the most common form of cancer in Qatar, and will be conducted in collaboration with researchers from Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC).

QBRI and RIKEN-PMI will address the possibility of implementing the biomarker discovery project utilising RIKEN’s genomic technology to identify disease signatures. The project will include a joint research laboratory for molecular diagnostics in Qatar, which will enable researchers to discover new biomarkers and develop personalised preventive medical solutions.

Commenting on the partnership, Dr Hilal Lashuel, Executive Director of QBRI said: “This partnership is the first fruit of QF Chairperson Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser’s visit to Japan earlier this year. The programme is also the first Qatar-Japan research bridge in biomedical research and personalised healthcare, which we believe will benefit the Qatari population an improve personalised healthcare throughout the entire region.

“This collaboration will compliment and extend ongoing research activity at Hamad Medical Corporation and offers unique opportunities for the molecular study of cancer and familial patterns of disease in Qatar.”

Professor Alexander Knuth, Medical Director and Chairman of Cancer Services at HMC added:“Rapid progress in treatment opportunities and outcomes through personalised medicine, is also anticipated enabling Qatar to offer excellence in cancer prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care.”

Commenting on the collaboration, Dr Yoshihide Hayashizaki, Director RIKEN-PMI, said: “This partnership is a milestone that marks a transitional stage in the field of medicine. It comes at the optimum time since the accumulated scientific knowledge and developed technologies are going to be applied to clinical practice, and will no doubt have a strong impact in Qatar and beyond.

“We appreciate this opportunity to collaborate with QBRI and through our commitment to cancer diagnosis we anticipate continuing breakthroughs as well as further developments in biomedical research in Qatar and elsewhere.”

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About Qatar Foundation Research and Development (QF R&D)

Qatar Foundation Research and Development (QF R&D) is charged with the Qatar National Research Strategy, dedicated to making Qatar a leading centre for research and development excellence and innovation. QF R&D is home to Qatar National Research Fund, a leading scientific research funding organisation, Qatar Science & Technology Park, an international hub for technology innovation and commercialisation, and Research institutes operating at the frontiers of science, including Qatar Biomedical Research Institute, Qatar Computing Research Institute and Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute.

About RIKEN PMI

RIKEN is Japan's most comprehensive and cutting-edge research institute for basic and applied research. Over 2,500 papers by RIKEN researchers are published every year in leading scientific and technology journals covering a broad spectrum of disciplines including physics, chemistry, biology, engineering, and medical science. RIKEN's research environment and strong emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and globalisation has earned a worldwide reputation for scientific excellence.

The Preventive Medicine & Diagnosis Innovation (PMI) Program deploys a broad range of research resources in physics, chemistry, engineering, biology and medical science to develop and establish more efficient disease detection technology that allows better disease prevention. Research groups taking part in the programme are working on the discovery of new biomarkers, the development of detection technology for clinical practice, and the development of diagnosis kits. The programme promotes collaborations within RIKEN and with universities, research institutes and hospitals both inside and outside Japan.

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