

Nobel Laureates to discuss stem cell advancements at Annual Research Conference

QF R&D to host world's leading geneticists in Doha

Doha, 09 November 2013 – Two of the world's leading geneticists will discuss the advancements of stem cell therapy in Doha this month during the Qatar Foundation Annual Research Conference (ARC'13), organised by Qatar Foundation Research and Development (QF R&D) and its research institutes.

Sir Martin John Evans, an advisory board member of Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI), and Professor Shinya Yamanaka, Director of the Centre for iPS Cell Research and Application at Kyoto University, were each awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, in 2007 and 2012 respectively, for their breakthrough research in stem cells.

Professor Yamanaka, received the award for discovering how to re-programme mature cells to become pluripotent, will take part in a panel discussion entitled, 'Facing the Challenges - International Experiences and Qatar's Opportunities', during the opening plenary of this year's Annual Research Conference. Both Professor Yamanaka and Sir Martin Evans, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for his contributions towards the discovery of principles for the introduction of specific gene modifications in mice through the use of embryonic stem cells, will participate in a debate titled 'Stem Cells and Gene Therapies: Promises and Challenges' on the second day of the conference.

Qatar Biomedical Research Institute is a principal constituent of Qatar Foundation Research and Development and will lead these discussions, and other health deliberations, at the conference. Dr Abdelali Haoudi, Executive Director of QBRI, expressed his delight at the calibre of researchers attending the event. "The number of international, regional and local leading experts taking part in the Annual Research Conference will once again shed light on Qatar's thriving research landscape and showcase the activities of top scientists here in Qatar," he said.

"Our institute was established to tackle diseases such as diabetes and cancer through five research laboratories and two research centres, including the Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine Research Center. QBRI engages an innovative multidisciplinary approach, with a focus on the major diseases affecting the country such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer."

At the conference QBRI will showcase its latest developments in genomic medicine and stem cell research with regards to diabetes. According to the International Diabetes Federation,

Qatar has a high prevalence of the disease ranking eighth globally with a 23.3 per cent comparative prevalence rate.

Dr Philippe Froguel, QBRI's Scientific Director of Genomic Medicine and Systems Biology Research Center, will present his latest findings at the conference showing the genetic basis of diabetes as well as the link between type 2 diabetes patients and their predisposition to develop certain kinds of cancer. Dr Froguel's findings were recently published in international scientific journals, including *Nature Genetics*, and he was the first person in the world to identify the type 2 diabetes gene.

"Qatar Foundation Annual Research Conference is an exciting opportunity for Qatar Foundation Research and Development and its constituents to talk about their own interesting scientific breakthroughs, helping to facilitate our collective efforts through the establishment of cooperative relationships. We at Qatar Biomedical Research Institute have built many fruitful relationships through this conference in the past," added Dr Haoudi.

The conference will serve as a platform in which various other research grand challenges will be highlighted. These include the protection of Qatar's cyber infrastructure, supporting the preservation of Arabic culture, art, language and heritage, as well as ensuring sustainable food supply. Other Qatar Foundation Research and Development constituents, including Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI), Qatar Energy and Environment Research Institute (QEERI), Qatar Science & Technology Park (QSTP) and Qatar National Research Fund (QNRF) will be among the entities to address how best to tackle such challenges.

The Annual Research Conference will be held at the Qatar National Convention Centre on November 24-25, where national stakeholders, local organisations and international partners will be informed about Qatar's latest research initiatives through networking sessions that will help facilitate knowledge transfer. Attendees will be granted access to poster sessions as well as exhibition stands showcasing the progress of Qatar's research efforts.

For more information about ARC'13 please visit: www.qf-arc.org.

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