



كلية طب وايل كورنيل في قطر
Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar

Member of Qatar Foundation

Press Release

International experts focus on spina bifida prevention and treatment

Doha – September 28, 2013: The prevention and treatment of spina bifida was the focus of a major international medical conference that took place over the weekend with the latest research data and innovative new treatment options available.

Hosted by Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q), in association with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Sidra Medical and Research Center, the International Conference on Spina Bifida: Genetic-Environmental Causes, Prevention and Treatment attracted acclaimed international leaders in epidemiology, genetics, fetal surgery, metabolomics and epigenetics. Faculty from WCMC-Q, HMC and Sidra who are all leading geneticists, practitioners in neurology, maternal fetal medicine and nephrology were also in attendance and delivered presentations about the condition.

In his opening address, WCMC-Q Dean Dr. Javaid Sheikh welcomed the distinguished group of experts and praised the work of researchers and the developments that have been made in advancing treatment of spina bifida.

Dr. Sheikh said: “Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar remains committed to innovative and high quality research not only for the benefit or the development of Qatar but also for international advancement and for the benefit of all those who are in need. So it is indeed a special honor for WCMC-Q to be associated with this international spina bifida conference. It demonstrates our commitment to the international community and points to our rapidly growing legacy in promoting quality medical research and a leader of medical education in the Gulf region.”

Spina bifida, along with anencephaly, are both neural tube defects (NTDs) with prevalence worldwide of about one in 1,000 live births. Infants with spina bifida often face a life challenged by paralysis and a variety of urological and neurological complications.

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

Nesreen Al-Refai
Director
Phone: +974 4492 8650
Fax: +974 4492 8444
nma2005@qata-
rmed.cornell.edu

Dr. Hilton Kolbe
Senior Writer
Phone: +974 4492 8651
Fax: +974 4492 8444
hik2009@qatar-
med.cornell.edu



كلية طب وايل كورنيل في قطر
Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar

Member of Qatar Foundation

Press Release

The exact cause of this birth defect is not known. Experts think that genes and the environment are part of the cause. Children with severe symptoms are sometimes born with fluid build-up on the brain. They may also have this problem after birth. It can cause seizures, intellectual disability, or sight problems. Some children also develop a curve in the spine, such as scoliosis.

Dr. Elizabeth Ross, head of the laboratory of neurogenetics and development at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York and organizer of the conference, said the meeting was designed to be highly interactive, geared toward regional physicians, geneticists and healthcare providers practicing in the GCC community. Participants had ample opportunity to discuss clinical experiences, therapeutic challenges and practical solutions in the near term as well as long-term prospects to accelerate advances in the field of spina bifida treatment and prevention.

The conference programs presented the latest information regarding the genetic and environmental factors contributing to the development of NTDs. It also provided a forum for overview and discussion of NTDs encountered in Qatar and the MENA region. In addition, an evening public forum provided an opportunity for the Doha non-medical community to hear about the latest research into prevention and treatment of spina bifida and other NTDs from experts in the field.

- Ends -

About Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar

Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar is a partnership between Cornell University and Qatar Foundation. It offers pre-medical and medical courses leading to the Cornell University M.D. degree with teaching by Cornell and Weill Cornell faculty and by physicians at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and Aspetar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital who hold Weill Cornell appointments. Through its biomedical research program, WCMC-Q is building a sustainable research community in Qatar while advancing basic science and clinical research. Through its medical college, WCMC-Q seeks to provide the finest education possible for medical students, to improve health care both now and for future generations, and to provide high

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

Nesreen Al-Refai
Director
Phone: +974 4492 8650
Fax: +974 4492 8444
nma2005@qatar-
rmed.cornell.edu

Dr. Hilton Kolbe
Senior Writer
Phone: +974 4492 8651
Fax: +974 4492 8444
hik2009@qatar-
med.cornell.edu



كلية طب وايل كورنيل في قطر

Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar

Member of Qatar Foundation

Press Release

quality health care to the Qatari population. www.qatar-med.cornell.edu

For more info, please contact:

Hanan Lakkis
Media Relations Manager
Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar
Mobile: +974 55536564
Direct Line: +974 44928661
hyl2004@qatar-med.cornell.edu

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

Nesreen Al-Refai
Director
Phone: +974 4492 8650
Fax: +974 4492 8444
nma2005@qatar-med.cornell.edu

Dr. Hilton Kolbe
Senior Writer
Phone: +974 4492 8651
Fax: +974 4492 8444
hik2009@qatar-med.cornell.edu