

WCM-Q expert discusses new diabetes treatments

Doha – November 11, 2015: New therapies and potential cures for diabetes was the topic for discussion at the latest installment of Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar’s (WCM-Q) Ask the Expert series.

The Ask the Expert interactive public talks are held at the Diplomatic Club as part of WCM-Q’s Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First campaign and aim to help the public understand health matters and encourage them to make positive changes to their lives.

The audience at the latest lecture heard from diabetes expert Dr. Rayaz Malik, Professor of Medicine at WCM-Q, who outlined various new drugs and procedures, which can actually cure diabetes in some cases.

Dr. Malik said: Many people still believe that diabetes is incurable and that its progress can only be managed. That may have been the case 10 years ago but it is no longer true today. Admittedly, there is no magic bullet but there are a range of therapies which can offer major improvements and in some cases cure the disease completely.”

Dr. Malik explained that there are two major forms of diabetes: type 1 which cannot be prevented, and type 2 which is linked to lifestyle factors like obesity, diet and a lack of exercise and accounts for 90 per cent of all cases worldwide. But Dr. Malik said people should also be aware that there are also some rare genetic variants of the disease that respond very well to medication.

For the majority of people, though, it is type 1 and type 2 that are the most prevalent. For type 1 diabetes, Dr. Malik said many people spend money on stem cell therapies but as yet these have not been successful. However, islet cell transplantation, where healthy pancreatic insulin-producing cells are transplanted into the liver of the diabetic patient, has proven to be an effective treatment. A more drastic solution is a whole pancreas transplant, which cures type 1 diabetes, but requires life-long immunosuppressant therapy.

Type 2 diabetes, being related to obesity, presents different challenges. The most important action that a patient can take is firstly to eat healthily, exercise regularly and lose weight. But there are also medical interventions. Two new classes of drug have been developed that help to address the underlying problem of weight and they could potentially stop a pre-diabetic individual from developing full-blown diabetes. They even have the potential to reverse type 2 diabetes completely.

Dr. Malik said the real hope for a cure for type 2 diabetes, though, is bariatric surgery. Although invasive it results in remission from diabetes in 70 per cent of patients.

But although medicine has advanced and treatments are constantly improving, the most important thing to remember is to take responsibility for your own body and look after it. Reducing your consumption of refined sugar and increasing the amount of fruit and vegetables you eat, in conjunction with 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day, will help you to avoid developing type 2 diabetes, meaning you won’t have to visit a doctor at all.



About Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar

Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar is a partnership between Cornell University and Qatar Foundation. It offers a comprehensive six-year medical program 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, WCM-Q is building a sustainable research community in Qatar while advancing basic science and clinical research. Through its medical college, WCM-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 quality health care to the Qatari population.

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