

WCM-Q team publishes first comprehensive review of e-health in the GCC

Doha – November 16, 2016: Students from Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) have published the first and most comprehensive systematic review of e-health in the GCC

E-health is an emerging best practice in modern healthcare in which the electronic delivery of health information and services over the Internet can benefit healthcare practitioners, patients, and scientists in numerous ways.

The WCM-Q study surveyed the state of research into e-health in the GCC countries and located several research gaps where further studies are needed, such as cost-benefit analyses and more randomized controlled trials to demonstrate actual benefits of e-health initiatives in the region. The results were then published by the Royal Society of Medicine's *Journal of Telemedicine and Telecare*, the number one ranked publication in its field.

Dr. Alan S. Weber, Visiting Associate Professor of English at WCM-Q, led the research team, which comprised students Rebal Turjoman, Mu Ji Hwang, Faryal Malick, Farah Al Sayyed and Yanal Shaheen. Qatar's leading role in developing new data privacy laws and secure networks was an important finding of the study.

"Researchers at ICTQatar, Qatar University and Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar know that medical privacy and confidentiality are key patient concerns in the Muslim world," Dr. Weber said. "Also, although a cybercriminal is probably not interested in intercepting the medical information of the average person on the Internet, the medical records of VIPs or the famous are highly sensitive information."

Several studies have shown that patients are reluctant to use Internet services related to medicine or banking if they feel that their private information could be stolen or misused. Most of the studies located by the authors were conducted in Saudi Arabia, which has a thriving research culture in medical informatics, telemedicine and e-health. Medical researchers in Saudi Arabia, as well as in Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and UAE, are very interested in understanding patient and doctor satisfaction with the new electronic medical records systems that are being implemented across the GCC. Such studies create a feedback loop in which problems in using the new technology can be identified and used to improve the service. For example, unreliable internet connections in a hospital can be a serious barrier to using electronic medical records since doctors will often resort to paper-based record keeping, and then enter the information later into a computer database, a process that wastes time and creates extra paperwork for the medical professional.

Another significant area of research in the GCC was online consumer health and health-information seeking behaviors. Learning about how patients and doctors seek and evaluate health information that they find on the Internet can help ministries of health to develop culturally appropriate, accurate online sources of information, as well as e-services like appointment scheduling and health pamphlets.



Dr. Weber said: “E-health services are the future as more people use internet-enabled devices. Can be used to monitor health at home with remote sensors, send SMS health alerts when to take medicines, and even face-to-face meetings with doctors via chat software when patients have difficulty making it to the hospital or when they need to consult a highly specialized doctor in another country.”

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Photo Caption:

Dr. Alan S. Weber and the research team

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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