

### **Students win trip to US research labs after attending inspirational conference**

**Doha – November 13, 2017:** Qatar’s first High School Medical Conference (HSMC) has been held, inspiring students to forge a career in medicine or the sciences.

The conference was organized by Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) at Qatar National Convention Center and comprised lectures and talks, workshops for teachers, a school exhibition, and student research presentations.

Noha Saleh, director of student recruitment and outreach at WCM-Q, said the aim was to offer students an experience that they don’t usually have, to show them what a career in medicine has to offer, and to provide them with a platform to showcase their skills and knowledge.

A highlight of the conference were the research presentations. Schools across Qatar were given the chance to participate in a student research contest based on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. Twenty-five teams from both independent and private schools entered and chose a topic under one of three following themes: Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages; ensuring access to water and sanitation for all; making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.

They then took part in a poster presentations competition last March. Fourteen teams made it through to the finals at the High School Medical Conference with the top three then selected by a panel of WCM-Q research experts. The winning team from Qatar International School received a fully-funded, one-week trip to WCM-Q’s parent campus in Ithaca in the United States, while the runners-up - 2nd placed Bright Future International School received iPads and invitations to attend a research symposium at Sidra Medicine, and 3rd placed Musab Bin Omair Secondary School – received gift vouchers and were also invited to the Sidra Medicine event. The flights were provided for by Sahtak Awalan – Your Health First, WCM-Q’s health campaign.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, WCM-Q’s assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs, said the level of professionalism achieved by the student researchers had been amazing. He added: “The goals of this conference were to help foster a love of science in high school students and provide them with the opportunity to participate in new experiences and engage in critical thinking with not only their peers, but professional academics, researchers and doctors.

“The conference has been a great success in this respect and I am sure will become a significant highlight in the academic calendar of Qatar’s schools.

“Through events like this, we can instill a passion for research and medicine in our young people which will eventually lead to greater national capacity in scientific fields, contributing to the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.”



In addition to the presentations, the student delegates also heard from Fawziya Al-Khater, assistant undersecretary for educational affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Dr. Marco Ameduri, associate dean for pre-medical education at WCM-Q, and three WCM-Q alumni: Dr. Aisha Al-Yousuf, Dr. Khalid Al-Khelaifi, and Dr. Karima Becetti.

Dr. Al-Yousuf is now the medical director of reproductive surgery at Sidra Medicine, Dr. Al Khelaifi is a sports orthopedic surgeon at Aspetar, and Dr. Becetti is a rheumatologist at Hamad Medical Corporation.

Finally, the high school teachers and counselors were able to benefit from professional development workshops in a number of topics including 'Mastery Learning in the Physical Sciences', 'Critical Reading and Writing', and 'Preparing Biology Students for the Transition to University'.

It is intended that the conference will become an annual event, bringing together highly motivated students aspiring to become the next generation of medical leaders. Although the main focus of the conference is raising awareness about the careers that medicine has to offer, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) will remain a fundamental core that will enhance and support the national economy. The conference also presents a great platform to engage educators across these various disciplines to achieve an integrated approach for students and prepare them for the future.

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#### **Photos Captions:**

Photo1: Opening ceremony of the first High School Medical Conference

Photo2: Mrs. Fawziya Al-Khater, assistant undersecretary for educational affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education

Photo3: Dr. Marco Ameduri, associate dean for pre-medical education at WCM-Q

Photo4: Dr. Rachid Bendriss, WCM-Q's assistant dean for student recruitment, outreach and foundation programs

Photo5: Dr. Khalid Al-Khelaifi, sports orthopedic surgeon at Aspetar

Photo6: Dr. Aisha Al-Yousuf, medical director of reproductive surgery at Sidra Medicine

Photo7: Dr. Karima Becetti, rheumatologist at Hamad Medical Corporation

Photo8: Posters Exhibition

Photo9: Mrs. Fawziya Al-Khater, assistant undersecretary for educational affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education touring the exhibition



Photo10: The winning team from Qatar International School receiving the ticket to New York offered by Your Health First campaign

### **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), Aspetar Orthopedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, the Primary Health Care Corporation, the Feto Maternal Center, and Sidra Medicine, 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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