

International recognition for WCM-Q and HMC research

Doha – January 7, 2018: Researchers at Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar (WCM-Q) and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) have received a top international award for their work on cardiovascular metabolism.

Dr. Charbel Abi Khalil, assistant professor of genetic medicine at WCM-Q, Dr. Nidal Assad, chairman of HMC's Heart Hospital, and Dr. Jassim Al Suwaidi, senior consultant cardiologist at HMC and the head of research at the heart hospital, were presented with the Paul Dudley White International Award at the 2017 annual meeting of the American Heart Association for two joint cardio-metabolic research projects.

The first project assessed red cell distribution width, a unique cardiovascular biomarker measured in the blood of patients with type 2 diabetes. They reported that a higher width – red blood cells usually measure between six and 8 micrometers across – is associated with an increased chance of mortality. The second research project focused on the prognosis of patients with diabetes and severe heart failure.

During the same conference, which was attended by thousands of delegates, the investigators were also invited to give lectures in a special session concentrating on diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Dr. Abi Khalil presented a talk about the genetic and epigenetic determinants of the cardiovascular complications of diabetes. He explained how the genetic determinants and the family history of diabetes can predispose people to certain complications. He also summarized the different genes that he and his fellow researchers have discovered in populations in Qatar and the world.

Dr. Al Suwaidi's lecture, entitled 'The Burden of Diabetes among Cardiac Patients in the Gulf: Lessons from Registries', outlined the very high prevalence of diabetes in the Middle East compared to the global average. He told the audience that in the GCC, about 20 percent of the population have type 2 diabetes, compared to just 8.6 percent worldwide. Additionally, he highlighted the sad fact that among cardiac patients in Qatar and the Gulf, up to 50 percent of all patients and up to 70 percent of women with cardiovascular disease, also have diabetes. Finally, he summarized some of the studies conducted by cardiologists and endocrinologists both in Qatar and the region.

Dr. Abi Khalil and Dr. Al Suwaidi said: "It was a great honor for both WCM-Q and HMC to receive the Paul Dudley White International Award and testament to the world class research that institutions in Qatar are conducting and the gravity in which they hold the problems of diabetes and heart disease among the local population.

"Through collaborative projects like these, we are able to further humanity's understanding of these diseases and hopefully get closer to developing new treatments or even cures."

The research projects - DNA Methylation and Gene Expression in Qataris with Type 2 Diabetes, and Modeling Vascular Complications of Type 2 Diabetes using In Vitro Derived Endothelial-Cardiomyocytes – were made possible by the Qatar National Research Fund through NPRP grants 7-701-3-192 and 9-169-3-024 respectively.



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Photo caption:

From left to right: Dr. Charbel Abi Khalil, Dr. Jassim Al Suwaidi, and Dr. Nidal Assad

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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