

Press release

QATAR BIOBANK RELEASES RESULTS OF PILOT PHASE

Large Portion of Sample Population suffer from Obesity and High Blood Pressure

Doha, 28 January 2015: Qatar Biobank, a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), has released the findings of its two year operational pilot phase, which reveal that 76 per cent of male and 70 per cent of female participants, from a sample of 1,200 are either overweight or obese. It also reveals that 52.7 per cent of the male participants and 31.7 per cent of female participants recorded pre-hypertensive (normal-high blood pressure levels) or hypertensive.

As Qatar and the surrounding region continue to witness an increase in the number of people affected by diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular disease, and cancer, the report illustrates how Qatar Biobank continues to play a leading role in the development of personalised medicine through the field of genomics.

Qatar Biobank also continues to support Qatar Foundation's mission to enhance national innovation and technology through medical research regarding prevalent health issues in Qatar. QF is committed to fostering a progressive society and promoting healthy lifestyles among the local population. Qatar Biobank's collection of samples and information on the health and lifestyles of large numbers of the national population makes vital medical research possible for scientists in Qatar, the region, and the world.

The pilot phase report also reveals that 80 per cent of the sample population reported no level of moderate physical activity per week, while 73 per cent of the sample population were classified as overweight.

"As Qatar's scientists and scholars continue to engage in the shift from traditional genomics as the mapping of an individual's DNA, to population-based studies that will improve the lives of future generations, the ongoing medical research on the causes of prevalent diseases in Qatar and the initial findings of the pilot phase once again reveal the value of the work underway at Qatar Biobank," said Dr Hadi Abderrahim, Managing Director of Qatar Biobank.

Furthermore, by spearheading the Qatar Genome Project, announced by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and Vice Chairperson of the Supreme Council of Health, during the World Innovation Summit on Health (WISH) 2013, Qatar Biobank continues to help chart a road map for future treatment through personalised medicine.

Genomics, a discipline in genetics that analyses the structure and function of genomes, the complete set of DNA within a single cell of an organism, is a rapidly emerging medical discipline. With 17% of Qatar's adult population suffering from type 2 diabetes, the knowledge and information collected by Qatar

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Biobank, will enable scientists to gain unique insights into the causes of these diseases, and tailor treatments matching individual genome coding within the next few years.

With plans to initially collect samples from more than 60,000 participants from the local population, Qatari nationals, or people who have resided in Qatar for more than 15 years, are eligible to participate through the contribution of samples.

This contribution involves attending an assessment session at the Qatar Biobank clinic that lasts less than three hours, and comprises the collection of a series of measurements including an individual's height, weight, blood pressure, and blood, urine and saliva samples. The health information obtained from medical records, DNA, lifestyle, and environmental exposures has the potential to provide further insights into the management and prevention of debilitating diseases common in Qatar.

"I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have come forward so far," said Dr. Hanan Al Kuwari, Chairperson of Qatar Biobank. "These volunteers are not only helping us build one of the world's largest population-based biobanks, they are contributing to improving the health of the people of Qatar. Qatar Biobank is committed to raising the Arab world's profile in the field of biomedical research, leading efforts for greater regional collaboration in this field, and creating an invaluable resource for research to develop medical treatments for an Arab population."

Additionally, in conjunction with the National Genome Committee, Qatar Biobank also hosted Qatar's first genome symposium entitled '*Human Genomics and Personalised Medicine – A Global Overview of challenges and opportunities*' last year.

Attended by 150 international field experts, the two-day event, held at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), provided a platform for the exchange of best practices on genomics research between regional and international experts. Through presentations, panel discussions, and closed sessions the National Genome Committee was able to discuss collaborative opportunities for the advancement of the Qatar Genome Project, with a selection of international experts.

Qatar Biobank was also recently awarded two International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certifications, by the British Standards Institute Group Middle East (BSI). The two qualifications - ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 - address Quality Management Systems and Information Security Management, which are top priorities for Qatar Biobank.

As it continues its work on the development of the Qatar Genome Project, Qatar Biobank is also set to host a two-day networking conference next month that will examine the development of Qatar's healthcare industry.

Qatar's inaugural '*Biobanking in the Content of Personalised Healthcare*' conference will be held on the 8th and 9th of February in Doha at the QNCC. It will gather local and regional experts with their international counterparts to discuss the future of medical research and personalised medicine in Qatar.

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To become a contributor to Qatar Biobank, please fill out a form at: <http://www.qatarbiobank.org.qa/participating/what-involve> or for more information please call: +974 4439 8899 or email takepart@qatarbiobank.org.qa

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About Qatar Biobank

Qatar Biobank is a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. Working with the Supreme Council of Health, Hamad Medical Corporation and scientists from Imperial College London, Qatar Biobank enables medical research on prevalent health issues in Qatar. Through its collection of samples and information about the health and lifestyles of large numbers of Qatar's population, Qatar Biobank makes vital medical research possible for scientists in Qatar, the region, and the world. Qatar Biobank is a unique resource that will raise Qatar's profile in biomedical research regionally and globally.

For more information:

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