

PERSONALIZED MEDICINE TAKES CENTER STAGE AT QATAR BIOBANKING CONGRESS

Doha, Qatar, March 14, 2017: Leading biomedical experts convened today for the opening of the second Qatar Biobank Conference at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC).

The two-day event, held under the theme ‘The Impact of Biobanking on Precision Medicine Initiatives,’ brings together top medical practitioners and researchers in biobanking, genomics and personalized medicine to discuss the field of biomedical science and the growing use of precision medicine to improve clinical outcomes.

Dr. Hamad Al-Ibrahim, Executive Vice President of Qatar Foundation Research and Development (QF R&D), delivered the opening remarks, saying: “Our overarching healthcare research objectives at Qatar Foundation Research and Development are geared towards finding ways to tackle cancer, diabetes, and other prevalent and destructive diseases through personalized medicine. Both Qatar Biobank and Qatar Genome Programme provide essential support for QF R&D’s mission to improve the health and social wellbeing of Qatar’s population. In Collaboration with stakeholders including Hamad Medical Corporation, Sidra Medical and Research Center, the Primary Health Care Corporation, Qatar’s research and academic institutions, and the Ministry of Public Health, we are enabling Qatar to create an approach to healthcare that is highly tailored to individuals.”

Dr. Asma Al Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Genome Programme Committee and Board Vice Chairperson of Qatar Biobank, welcomed attendees, saying: “Each day we get a little closer to achieving global personalized medicine in which treatment and prevention are directly based on individuals’ lifestyle, genes and environment. Through the exchange of ideas at this conference, we will take another step along that path.”

Dr. Al Thani also presented on how the Qatar Population Biobank Project aims to establish a research enterprise platform across Qatar to achieve significant improvement in diagnostic and predictive intelligence required to deliver personalized healthcare.

In his keynote address, Dr. Edward Abrahams, President of the Personalized Medicine Coalition (PMC) in Washington, discussed the advantages of personalized medicine, its current status, the obstacles to its development and implementation, and also proposed an agenda for its future in the United States and other nations, including Qatar.

“Personalized medicine is an evolving field in which physicians use diagnostic tests to determine which treatments will work best for each patient. By combining the data from those tests with an individual’s medical history, circumstances and values, health care providers can develop targeted treatment and prevention plans,” Dr. Abrahams said. “And, in so doing, personalized medicine promises to improve clinical outcomes for patients as well as increase the efficiency of health systems around the world by directing resources to where they will be most productive.”

During the conference, Dr. Nahla Maher Afifi, Scientific and Education Manager and Acting Director of Qatar Biobank, will present Qatar Biobank’s findings to date, including updated statistics about chronic diseases and other healthcare issues in Qatar.

“Chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and diabetes are emerging as significant health problems and are now the major cause of death and disability in Qatar. The population in Qatar is also experiencing a lifestyle transition, replacing traditional diets with those higher in fat and refined and processed foods, and decreasing the levels of physical activity,” Dr. Afifi said.

She added: “Analysis of the pilot phase data indicates that in addition to the primary goal of Qatar Biobank to collect information and samples as a platform to empower research in Qatar, it also plays an important role of early identification and prompt treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, which will reduce the future burden in health sector.”

For more information about Qatar Biobank, please visit:

www.qatarbiobank.org.qa/home

Image Caption

Image 1: Dr. Hamad Al-Ibrahim, Executive Vice President of Qatar Foundation Research and Development (QF R&D), delivers his opening remarks at the second Qatar Biobank Conference.

Image 2: Dr. Edward Abraham, President of the Personalized Medicine Coalition (PMC), Washington, at the opening ceremony of the second Qatar Biobank Conference.

Image 3: Dr. Said Ismail, Manager of Qatar Genome Programme (QGP) delivering remarks during the first day of the second Qatar Biobank Conference.

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About Qatar Biobank

Qatar Biobank, a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, is a population-based platform where biological samples are provided by participants. Through the collection of samples and information on the health and lifestyles of Qatari citizens and long-term residents, Qatar Biobank aims to make vital medical research possible for scientists in Qatar, the region and the world.

Launched in 2012 in collaboration with the Supreme Council of Health, Hamad Medical Corporation and supported by expert scientists from Imperial College London, Qatar Biobank completed the two-year operational pilot phase in 2015 marked by the official inauguration of the state-of-the-art facility by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and Vice Chairperson of the Supreme Council of Health.

To learn more about Qatar Biobank and how to become a contributor, please visit:

www.qatarbiobank.org.qa

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