

WISH AUTISM RESEARCH PRESENTED AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN BHUTAN

Dr Muhammad Waqar Azeem of Sidra Medical and Research Centre Speaks on Supported Independent Living

Doha, Qatar, April 22, 2017: Autism research conducted by the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) was presented at the International Conference on Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders (ANDD2017) in Thimphu, Bhutan, on April 19-21.

Dr. Muhammad Waqar Azeem, chair of psychiatry at Sidra Medical and Research Centre (Sidra), and academic co-chair of WISH 2016 forum on Autism, moderated a session titled 'Supported Independent Living', one of the core subjects of the WISH 2016 report, 'Autism: A Global Framework for Action', co-authored by Dr Azeem.

Dr Azeem said: "Policymakers must focus on educating the public on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as well as support early detection and diagnosis, ensuring that children with ASD and their caregivers have access to evidence-based therapies and other support in the community."

The conference was jointly organized by the Ministry of Health of the Royal Government of Bhutan, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and World Health Organization (WHO). Health ministers from the South-East Asia region, international experts, individuals with autism and their caregivers, legislators, bureaucrats, and representatives from civil society attended the conference. The theme was: 'Effective and sustainable multi-sectoral programs for individuals, families and communities living with autism and neurodevelopmental disorders'.

"Qatar is quickly becoming a net-exporter of best practice in healthcare policy," said Egbert Schillings, CEO of WISH. "Other countries are increasingly looking to Qatar to learn from its progressive health policies, with Autism being a perfect example. Just last week Qatar joined a small minority of nations globally to launch a comprehensive national strategy for autism spectrum disorder. We are delighted that Dr Waqar is carrying the message of broad support for people with autism to new audiences and that the WISH report helps inform the decisions of policymakers at the highest level worldwide."

The primary objective of the conference was to provide a platform for policymakers to engage with experts and stakeholders in sharing knowledge and best practices on autism and neurodevelopmental disorders. It also provided an opportunity to learn ways to align country specific strategies with sustainable development goals, as well as promote cooperation and partnerships between nations.

WISH, an initiative of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), has a longstanding commitment to raising awareness of issues around mental health and developing evidence-based research to address related policy challenges, such as dementia and autism. Media coverage plays a vital role in informing the public of the support that is available for children with autism and their families. To support culturally sensitive and accurate mental health coverage in Qatar, WISH partnered with the Atlanta-based Carter Centre Mental Health Program in June 2016, to launch a local chapter of the Rosalynn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism (RCJF). This year WISH will support a second cohort of Qatar based fellows to receive training in Atlanta and join this global fellowship dedicated to reducing the stigma of mental health conditions. The first cohort of four Doha based journalists received training in September 2016.

To read the full WISH 2016 report: 'Autism: A Global Framework for Action', click here <http://bit.ly/2fH1sbn>

-ENDS-

About the World Innovation Summit for Health:

The World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) is a global healthcare community dedicated to capturing and disseminating the best evidence-based ideas and practices. WISH is an initiative of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) and is under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, its Chairperson.

The inaugural WISH Summit took place in Doha in 2013 and convened more than 1,000 global healthcare leaders. Through international summits and a range of ongoing initiatives, WISH is creating a global community of leading innovators in healthcare policy, research and industry.

Together, they are harnessing the power of innovation to overcome the world's most urgent healthcare challenges and inspire other stakeholders to action.

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science, and Community Development (QF) is a private, non-profit organization that is supporting Qatar on its journey from a carbon economy to knowledge economy by unlocking human potential, for the benefit of not only Qatar, but the world. Founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir, QF is chaired by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser.

QF's work encompasses education, research and community development. World-class universities are brought to Qatar to help create an education sector in which young people can develop the attitudes and skills required for a knowledge economy. At the same time, QF builds Qatar's innovation and technology capacity by developing and commercializing solutions through key sciences. The Foundation also works to foster a progressive society while enhancing cultural life, protecting Qatar's heritage and addressing immediate social needs in the community.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>