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NU-Q WINS GRANT TO EXAMINE

DIGITAL HEALTH TOOLS FOR YOUTH

Doha, Qatar – April 17, 2016 – Whether young people care about their health and pay attention to public health campaigns is at the heart of a health communication study being carried out by Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q), in collaboration with other researchers in Qatar and the U.S.

The study, ‘Qatari adolescents: How do they use digital technologies for health information and health monitoring?’, which received a \$300,000 grant from the Qatar National Research Fund in March examines how Qatari youth from 13 to 18 years of age acquire and evaluate information about health issues of all kinds. The study probes into what is known about young people’s specific health concerns and conditions, as well as how they use technology to acquire and share such information.

Aimed at discovering how future public information campaigns can better reach youth beyond typical media sources and school settings, the study is being carried out by Dr. Klaus Schoenbach, NU-Q’s associate dean for research, an internationally known media researcher; and Dr. Ellen Wartella, a renowned expert on children’s media and health, who is a Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani professor of communication, psychology and education at NU’s Evanston, Illinois campus in the U.S. They are joined by Dr. Salma Mawfek Khaled, a survey researcher at Qatar University’s Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) where she is an assistant professor and Dr. Paul Amuna, who heads the research section of the Primary Health Care Corporation of Qatar who will serve as consultant.

“We are evaluating the channels adolescents use to find answers for their health concerns in

order to find what works best. We hope that information that will improve the options available to them,” said Schoenbach, who will be leading the research team.

Qatar’s youth are subject to some of the highest rates of obesity-risk in the world. In addition, they are exposed to cultural vices such as shisha smoking and environmental restrictions such as extreme weather conditions.

“The threshold for physical activity is much higher in this part of the world than in most countries, so we’re trying to communicate the best ways to educate and train using digital sources,” Schoenbach said.

Schoenbach is an expert on persuasive communication. Next to having conducted a large number of studies on persuasion in the area of public affairs, he has written the first German textbook on persuasive communication.

Wartella is a leading scholar on the role of media in children’s development and serves on a variety of national and international boards and committees on children’s health and wellness issues. She has published more than 100 books, articles and book chapters on children and media issues and has conducted multiple studies as a consultant and a member of three study commissions at the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Medicine on childhood obesity.

Khaled is assistant research professor at the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University. She has extensive experience in survey research methods and applied survey data analysis through her work as an analyst and methodology consultant with Statistics Canada. At SESRI, Khaled has conducted health system analysis using large survey datasets.

The research project will begin in 2016 and completed in 2017.

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About Northwestern University in Qatar

Northwestern University in Qatar draws from its parent organization, [Northwestern University](#) (Evanston, Illinois), a distinguished history, famous programs and an exceptional faculty. Founded in partnership with Qatar Foundation, NU-Q provides a framework through which students explore the world and, ultimately, shape its future through its distinguished schools of [communication](#), [journalism](#), and [liberal arts](#).