

Qatar students inspired to follow a career in medicine

Doha – November 8, 2017: Four Qatari high school students who won summer scholarships to the US have returned to the country eager to pursue careers in medicine.

The four students all won the prize in Weill Cornell Medicine Qatar's (WCM-Q) annual Healing Hands essay competition. The four each received a fully-funded, one-week Doctors of the Future Scholarship to study in the world-class biomedical research laboratories at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City. They also attended lectures and learned what life is like for a medical student at one of the world's top medical colleges. In addition, the four spent a week at Cornell University in Ithaca in upstate New York which gave them a more varied view of student life. This section of the trip was designed by Dr. Krystyna Golkowska, WCM-Q's associate professor of English, and was designed to give the students an idea of what it is like to study for an undergraduate degree and to acquaint them with Cornell as an institution. Each winner was accompanied by a member of their families as a chaperone.

Dr. Rachid Bendriss, Assistant Dean for Student Recruitment, Outreach and Foundation Programs at WCM-Q, explained the importance of the initiative.

He said: "Designed and implemented by the Office of Student Recruitment and Outreach, the program, which is now in its 10th year, continues to inspire the future generation of Qatari physicians to pursue a career in medicine.

"Considered one of the highest yield outreach programs the college is running, more than 90 percent of the participants end up as doctors-in-training at WCM-Q."

This year's scholarship winners – twins Alia Salman Ashkanani and Ghalya Salman Ashkanani, both of Michael E. Debakey High School; Khalifa Ahmed Elmagarmid from Qatar Academy; and Mashael Salem Al-Naemi of American School of Doha – have now returned from the US and spoken of their experiences at a ceremony at WCM-Q attended by staff, faculty and Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of the college. They also received a certificate from Dr. Sheikh to mark their achievements.

Ghalya Ashkanani said she and her sister had been placed in the laboratory of Dr. Randi Silver, associate dean of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences and professor of physiology and biophysics.

Ghalya said: "In New York the experience was laboratory-oriented. We were divided into two pairs and our lab was concerned with asthma in premature children and the development of their lungs.

"I loved it as it was about pediatrics, a subject I'm really interested in and I loved that I was able to share the experience with my sister. I'm applying to WCM-Q and the experience made my resolve stronger and showed me what I could do as a doctor."

Mashael Salem Al-Naemi was involved with the culture of cells during her time at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York, and the ways that cells can be grown outside of the human body.



She was placed in the laboratory of Dr. Stefan Worgall, distinguished professor of pediatric pulmonology and chief of the Division of Pediatric Pulmonology, Allergy and Immunology, and said the scholarship had been an amazing experience.

She said: “At Ithaca we attended classes and then we had field trips and we got to have the full college experience. I really got to apply the knowledge that I’ve learned in school. I think the most important thing I learned during the whole trip was that in later life I really want to be involved in research and that I also want to be physician specializing in sports medicine.”

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, said the standard of entries to the Healing Hands competition had been extremely high this year, and that the four winners had truly excelled themselves and had been excellent ambassadors for Qatar.

He added: “WCM-Q’s Healing Hands competition is about inspiring the next generation of Qatari scientists and in Alia, Ghalya, Khalifa, and Mashael I think we have succeeded. These four young people show outstanding promise and I have no doubt that they will make a significant contribution to the scientific and medical landscape in the future.”

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Photo Caption:

Dr. Javaid Sheikh, dean of WCM-Q, with winners and faculty

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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