

## **QATAR BIOBANK SIGNS MOU WITH WEILL CORNELL MEDICINE – QATAR AND VITO**

*Partnership includes scientific research collaborations, sharing knowledge and education courses*

**Doha, 31 January 2016:** Qatar Biobank, a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) and Vlaamse Instelling voor Technologisch Onderzoek in Belgium (VITO).

Aimed at strengthening the scientific collaboration between Qatar Biobank, WCM-Q and VITO, the partnership includes sharing knowledge in order to further research in the field of retinal image analysis and help develop non-invasive and convenient health monitoring and early disease identification.

Qatar Biobank supports QF's mission to enhance national innovation and technology through medical research regarding prevalent health issues in Qatar. Through its collection of samples and information on the health and lifestyles of a large percentage of the national population, Qatar Biobank is making vital medical research possible for scientists in Qatar, the region, and the world.

According to an abstract submitted <sup>1</sup> at Qatar Foundation's Annual Research Conference 2014 in collaboration with VITO, "the eye is the clearest and most accessible organ to observe anatomical and physiological characteristics of microvessels -the smallest blood vessels of the circulatory system. Subtle changes in the retinal blood vessels can mirror early cardio- and cerebrovascular events long before their clinical manifestation."

The three organisations will work together to exchange scientific information through training, education courses, and joint research projects to demonstrate the value of retinal images in patients at risk of stroke, diabetes and a number of other neurological illnesses like dementia and multiple sclerosis. All research using specimens housed within Qatar Biobank will be conducted solely in Qatar.

Dr Hadi Abderrahim, Managing Director of Qatar Biobank said, "As we embark on the second phase of Qatar Biobank, the pursuit of research collaborations is a key element to our success in shaping the future of personalised healthcare. We look forward to the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qscience.com/doi/pdf/10.5339/qfarc.2014.HBPP0455>

exchange of scientific information and future collaborations with Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar and VITO.”

Using samples collected by Qatar Biobank, WCM-Q and VITO will undertake ‘translational’ research to develop innovative imaging and genetic biomarkers in a variety of medical diseases.

Dr Rayaz A. Malik, Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar, said: “The partnership between WCM-Q, Qatar Biobank and VITO offers great opportunities for new research that could lead to significantly improved healthcare outcomes for our patients. We are delighted to sign this new Memorandum of Understanding to provide a framework for increased collaboration and sharing of expertise, which we are confident will be extremely successful and productive.”

VITO is a leading European independent research and technology organisation in the areas of cleantech and sustainable development, elaborating solutions for societal challenges.

Qatar Biobank recently inaugurated their state-of-the-art building following the conclusion of its two-year operational pilot phase, the results of which provided a snapshot into the current health of the population - gathered from samples collected from 1,200 participants.

For more information about Qatar Biobank, please visit:

[www.qatarbiobank.org.qa/home](http://www.qatarbiobank.org.qa/home)

### **Image Captions**

**Image 1:** (L to R) Dr Rayaz A. Malik, Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar, Dr Hadi Abderrahim; Managing Director of Qatar Biobank, Dirk Fransaer; Managing Director of VITO.

**Image 2:** (L to R) Dr Rayaz A. Malik, Professor of Medicine at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar, Dr Hadi Abderrahim; Managing Director of Qatar Biobank, Dirk Fransaer; Managing Director of VITO.

**Image 3:** Corneal Confocal Microscopy (CCM) Test.

**ENDS**



### **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 2014 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](http://www.qatarbiobank.org.qa)

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### **For more information:**

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