BEST PRACTICES IMPLEMENTED AT QATAR BIOBANK HIGHLIGHTED AT INTERNATIONAL BIOBANKING CONFERENCE

_Doha, Qatar, March 27, 2019:_ Leading scientists and experts who attended the International Biobanking Conference 2019, which concluded today at Qatar National Convention Centre, were given the opportunity to tour Qatar Biobank and its facilities.

The best practices implemented at Qatar Biobank – a member of Qatar Foundation, and part of Qatar Foundation Research, Development, and Innovation – were highlighted to conference delegates during their tour of the state-of-the-art facilities where biological samples collected from the population are stored and analyzed.

The quality and safety of the samples is maintained at Qatar Biobank by using the most reliable automated storage systems and procedures including sample tracking, liquid nitrogen storage, and duplicate storage sites.

Dr. Richard O’Kennedy, Vice President for Research, Development, and Innovation, Qatar Foundation, said: “We are delighted to have hosted the International Biobanking Conference as Qatar embarks on its national precision medicine initiative. It is platforms like this conference that provide the impetus for local and international experts in the field to converge and initiate the ground-work for addressing our common challenges through a focused agenda. Qatar Biobank and Qatar Genome Programme, having showcased their work to a global audience, will continue to deliver excellence through high-quality, innovative health and biomedical research in Qatar.”

Dr. Zhengming Chen, Lead Principal Investigator at China Kadoorie Biobank, and one of the keynote speakers of the conference, said: “Qatar Biobank has been one of the major recent developments in ‘big biobanks’ in the last 10 years. This is an exciting era in medical research and technology. These kinds of bigger studies allow for more reliable assessment of risks for a spectrum of diseases.”

Following the visit, Dr. Andrew Brooks, Chief Operating Officer and Director of Technology Development of RUCDR Infinite Biologics at Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA, said: "The way we do genomic research and the standard of care is changing. Integrated sample processing, analysis, and functional quality control is critical for success."
“The model used by Qatar Biobank is an excellent example of how science and technology continue to lead innovation and how we can use the latest technology for sample processing.”

“It is very impressive how Qatar Biobank has made strategic operational and technology decisions that gives them the most flexibility and opportunities moving forward. They have the infrastructure to expand what they are doing in the future without having to build a new biobank or make significant changes to the way they do things.”

During the three-day conference, held under the theme ‘Quality Matters: A Global Discussion in Qatar’, the value of collaboration was also highlighted by representatives from international biobank networks.

Speakers shared best practices from across the world, including from the Leipzig Medical Biobank in Germany, Helsinki Biobank in Finland, the China Kadoorie Biobank, the Biobank in Austria, and Qatar Biobank.

Dr. Asmaa Al Thani, Board Vice Chairperson of Qatar Biobank and Chairperson of Qatar Genome Programme Committee, emphasized that such collaborations must include multidisciplinary stakeholders. “Qatar Biobank strives to build partnerships across the spectrum, bringing together and coordinating the work of scientists as well as clinicians, laboratories, epidemiologists, academic institutions, regulators, and funding institutions – and also our patients.”

Dr. Roberto Bertollini, Adviser to Qatar’s Minister of Public Health, said: "International collaboration gives biomedical researchers access to larger biobanks, which is essential to the study of cancer and other chronic diseases, and for comparing lifestyle and clinical information to identify the causes and enhance the prediction of such diseases.”

The International Biobanking Conference 2019 was organized in partnership with the European and Middle Eastern Society for Biopreservation and Biobanking (ESBB), and supported by BBMRI-ERIC, a European research infrastructure for biobanking, and the International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER).

For more information about Qatar Biobank, please visit: www.qatarbiobank.org.qa/home

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About Qatar Biobank
Qatar Biobank, a long-term health initiative, was launched by Qatar to reduce the number of chronic illnesses in the population and improve the health of future generations through medical research on the causes of prevalent illnesses. This is done by gathering biological samples and information on the health and lifestyle of Qatar’s people.

In the next few years, research based on the samples and information gathered by Qatar Biobank will reveal the effect of lifestyle, environment and genetics on Qatari population. It will also provide insight into the reasons why certain individuals develop specific illnesses. Qatar Biobank is a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, and works in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Health and Hamad Medical Corporation.

To learn more about Qatar Biobank and how to become a contributor, please visit: www.qatarbiobank.org.qa

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Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organization that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programs across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, research and development, and community development.

QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Amir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF’s world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation’s development.

QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering social engagement through programs that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

For a complete list of QF’s initiatives and projects, please visit: www.qf.org.qa
For any media inquiries, please contact: pressoffice@qf.org.qa