FUTURE IMPACT OF BIOBANKING ON QATAR’S HEALTHCARE TAKES CENTER STAGE AT INTERNATIONAL BIOBANKING CONFERENCE

Scientists and biomedical experts from 15 countries attend global discussion in Qatar

Doha, Qatar, March 25, 2019: Scientists and health experts from 15 countries convened today for the opening of the International Biobanking Conference 2019. The conference - organized by Qatar Biobank, a member of Qatar Foundation (QF) and part of Qatar Foundation for Research, Development, and Innovation (QF RDI) – aims to highlight the role of biobanking and medical research in advancing healthcare and improving clinical outcomes.

The three-day event, held under the theme ‘Quality Matters: A Global Discussion in Qatar,’ is being hosted 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).

Highlighting QF’s research strategy, and its array of initiatives designed to enable innovative health and medical research in Qatar, in his opening speech at the conference, Dr. Richard O’Kennedy, Vice President for Research, Development, and Innovation, Qatar Foundation, said: “Biomedical research is accelerating the transformation of healthcare from generalized treatments to preventive, pre-emptive, and personalized medicine. In this domain, QF RDI has been active through impactful initiatives spearheaded by Qatar Biobank and Qatar Genome Programme.

“As a crucial first step in the approach to precision medicine, the value of biobanking and genomics research, and their key role in improving the health and wellbeing of Qatar’s population, cannot be overstated. It is through events like the International Biobanking Conference that our scientists and researchers have the right platform to engage in the exchange of knowledge, conduct in-depth discussions with global experts on new developments and innovations; and forge networks and meaningful collaborations that could support the development of Qatar’s precision medicine initiative.”

Dr. Asmaa Al Thani, Board Vice Chairperson of Qatar Biobank and Chairperson of Qatar Genome Programme Committee, said: “Expert conferences and conversations such as today’s gathering in Qatar are vital to the success of biomedical research projects. This conference is an opportunity for Qatar’s researchers and scientists to share our progress
with international experts and learn best practices in the field, which is crucial to the success of large-scale biobanking endeavors in the region and internationally.

“We take firm steps every day as we get closer to achieving personalized medicine for the people of Qatar, which will prove vital in the treatment and prevention of diseases. The support we are receiving for our research programs from our stakeholders, scientists, and the residents of Qatar is one of the driving factors in our success story.”

In his keynote address, Dr. Jim Vaught, Chief of the Biorepositories and Biospecimen Research Branch at the US National Cancer Institute, and Editor-in-Chief of Biopreservation and Biobanking, the official journal of ISBER, highlighted the importance of quality management for international biobanking collaborations.

“The International Biobanking Conference is a testament to how far Qatar has come in a relatively short space of time – not only in setting up its biobank, but in organizing this important global discussion to tackle quality management in biobanking, bringing together participants from so many different countries and influential speakers from the key international institutions to share their experience and best practices.

“I am impressed with the automation and quality control procedures Qatar has put in place at its biobank facilities. It is wonderful to see the progress being made and the milestones reached by Qatar Biobank, with the number of participants who have been screened to date, and the institution's overall approach to studying the Qatari population.”

Over the coming days, delegates from Qatar and around the world will discuss a variety of topics and attend wide-ranging sessions and presentations focused on the role of biobanks in healthcare; the importance of population biobanks; the use of big data and artificial intelligence in medical research; the importance of international collaborations in biobanking; and reviewing quality in biobanking in Qatar and beyond.

Qatar Biobank is a large-scale medical research initiative which collects data and biological samples from the local population in an effort to develop customized medical solutions to the various diseases and health issues prevalent in the country.

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

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