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HMC expert: Healthier lifestyle ensures better health of older adults

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THE United Nations (UN) established the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP), which is observed worldwide on October 1. Its aim is to encourage countries to draw attention to and challenge negative stereotypes and misconceptions about older persons and ageing, and to enable older persons to realise their potential. DR Hanadi Al-Hamad, National Health Strategy Lead for Healthy Ageing, and her team wholeheartedly support health awareness and promotion for adults aged 60 and above to help them remain healthier, more active and independent for as long as possible. On IDOP, the Healthy Ageing Program team collaborated with Qatar Museums to conduct targeted activities for patients over 60 and their families in the National Museum of Qatar.

Dr Al-Hamad, who is also the Lead of the Qatar National Dementia Plan and the Chairperson of the Department of Geriatrics and LongTerm Care at HMC, advised that practical health literacy, effective health screening programs, and the adoption of healthier lifestyles are essential in helping promote better health in older adults.

“When I was a young doctor the overall life expectancy in Qatar was significantly lower and the overall belief was that after the age of 60 you were old and should preferably stay at home. With better healthcare services and improved living conditions, the life expectancy in Qatar now is around 80 years and people should be able to continue to live productive and happier lives when they are well above 60. But while the public health sector can help promote healthier living, every individual has the responsibility to invest in their physical health and mental well-being and they should do this when they are in their 30s, 40s, and 50s to reap the benefits later in life. That is why are so delighted to collaborate with partners such as Qatar Museums to promote social and cultural activities for older adults that are important in helping to promote both physical and emotional health,” said Dr Al-Hamad.

“As people age, they have a higher risk of common chronic diseases such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, which can raise the risk of stroke and dementia. We want more adults to be more aware of these drivers of illness and disability and proactively prevent or at least minimize the effects of these diseases to improve the quality of life in older age. We conduct regular health literacy campaigns and offer multiple health screening clinics and services that are targeted towards people over the age of 60. We also conduct widespread professional geriatric training for healthcare professionals working in other fields, so they are more knowledgeable about the needs of this patient group,” explained Dr Al-Hamad.

“While Qatar still has a relatively young population, we must focus now on the health and social care needs of the next generation of older people and encourage all adults to understand the concept and importance of healthy ageing. We are therefore working together with healthcare and community partners to create conditions for older people to manage their health and maintain their independence and dignity and thereby improve their well-being and active life years. A great way to share this message is through joint activities with partners such as Qatar Museums, who are hosting several activities for people over the age of 60 during this period,” added Dr Al Hamad.