

# UCCQ research to foster active living & healthy diet in Qatar

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THE eating and activity habits of Arabic speaking adults in Qatar will be the subject of a research project by the University of Calgary – Qatar (UCCQ).

Thled: 'Fostering Active Living and Healthy Eating: Understanding the Physical Activity and Dietary Behaviors of Arabic Speaking Adults Living in the State of Qatar', the study is made possible thanks to funding provided by the National Priorities Research Program (NPRP) 6th Cycle. UCCQ was awarded \$929,292 for the three-year project.

"This research will build a solid foundation of knowledge, which can be used to inform the development of tailored and culturally sensitive multiple intervention programmes. Increasing active living and healthy diets will have a positive impact on cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity and cancer problems, which will ultimately improve the health and well being of Arabian people living in Qatar," said Dr Tam Truong Donnelly, associate dean of research and project lead principal investigator.

The project is part of Dr Donnelly's research programme aiming at promoting healthy lifestyle and healthy living in Qatar. It is a continuation of her previous research project funded by QNRF's UREP, which was conducted in 2010, on healthy lifestyle, physical activity, diet and smoking among Qatari women.

"Words cannot adequately express our gratitude to QNRF, to Qatar Foundation, to Qatar. We would not be able to conduct research and continue making a contribution to Qatar health care without the generous and persistent support from QNRF and Qatar Foundation. All my research team members and I are committed to doing an excellent job with our research projects and make a contribution to Qatar society to the best of

help us in the public health department in setting policies and legislation regarding nutrition and physical activity in Qatar. Nutrition and physical activity is one of the National Health Strategy 2011 – 2016 goals. This research will benefit the action plan, hence my involvement as the chairperson of the National Committee for Nutrition and Physical activity. The output of the research will provide us with knowledge, attitudes and recommendation related to nutrition and physical activity," said Dr Sheikha al Aroud hint Mohammad al Thani, co-principal investigator and manager of Health Promotion & Non-Communicable Diseases at the Supreme Council of Health.

UCCQ Dean & CEO Dr Kim Critchley said, "We are honoured to be recognised as a university that prides itself on research endeavours. The University of Calgary is one of the top research universities in Canada. Its research plan is about inspiring and supporting discovery, creativity and innovation. UCCQ is also proud to be contributing to the advancement of health care and education in Qatar. The state is investing wisely in developing a knowledge-based economy. We hope, through our research, to make the lives of all Qatar people more comfortable, healthy and long-lasting."

Along with Donnelly, al Aroud and Critchley, the research team includes Dr Kathleen Benjamin, principal investigator and post-doctoral fellow at the University of Calgary-Qatar; Dr al Hareth al Khater, co-principal investigator and chairman of Medical Research Centre at Hamad Medical Corporation; Dr Mohamed Ahmedna, co-principal investigator and professor and associate dean (Research) at College of Arts, and Sciences, Qatar University; Dr Tak Fung, co-principal investigator and senior Math/Statistics consultant in the Information Technologies at the University of Calgary; Dr Kevin Teacher, collaborator and associate professor at the University of Calgary-Qatar; and Dr Ailsa Welch, Collaborator and researcher in nutritional epidemiology at the University of East Anglia Norwich.

"I am honoured by QNRF's decision to fund this research. Several years ago, I decided to focus my research on the promotion of physical activity, because as a nurse, I witnessed many needless declines in my patients' health and well-being due to sedentary lifestyles. Factors that influence people's decisions to exercise or not to exercise are multiple, complex and interconnected. This research will help to explicate these factors," Benjamin said.

