

Interview with a Student

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In this issue, we are pleased to host one of the graduates of the College of Medicine at Qatar University, who has managed throughout his academic journey to combine academic excellence, scientific research, innovation, and community engagement. His interests span dermatology, modern medical technologies, and medical education, in addition to his passion for leadership and public communication. In this interview, medical student Mohammed Al-Hor from the College of Medicine at Qatar University takes us through his journey from the lecture halls to the horizons of scientific research and professional excellence, as well as his aspirations for the future.

Mohammed, tell us about yourself and how your journey in medicine began. What motivated you to choose this path?

I am a medical doctor and an incoming Dermatology Resident at Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), having recently graduated from Qatar University. My journey in medicine began with a desire to find a career that balanced intellectual challenge with a deep, humanitarian purpose. My family played a massive role in this; their constant support and guidance showed me how much of a positive, life-changing impact a doctor can have on individuals and the wider community. Inspired by the long history of medicine and, more importantly, the core values of Islam, I chose this path to combine the precision of modern science with genuine human empathy.

When did you discover your passion for scientific research? What was the first research experience that significantly impacted your journey?

I discovered my passion for research early in my medical training when I realized that clinical practice tells us "What" to do, but research answers "why" and "how" we can do it better. The first experience that truly impacted my journey was working on a project that eventually won a Gold Medal at the Euro-Invent Young Scientists competition in Romania in 2021. Seeing our ideas recognized on an international stage made me realize that even as a young student, I could contribute meaningful knowledge to the global medical community.

Which international experience do you consider a turning point, and what did you learn from it?

The true turning point for me was winning second place for a research poster presentation at the Abu Dhabi International Conference in Dermatology and Aesthetics (AIDA). It was a turning point because it pushed me directly into the international dermatology community, a specialty I am heavily interested and invested in. I learned that data and research are universal languages. Connecting with top international experts taught me that achieving excellence requires looking beyond your local environment and being open to global collaboration.

What drew you to dermatology, and how do you envision your future in this field?

Dermatology completely fascinated me because the skin acts as a visible window into the entire body. I love the visual, diagnostic nature of the specialty and how closely it connects to a patient's quality of life and mental well-being. Looking ahead, I envision myself as an active clinician and academic. I want to provide top-tier care to my patients at HMC while continuing to publish impactful research, specifically focusing on how internal conditions manifest on the skin.

How do you view the role of modern technologies and AI in advancing medical education and practice?

Technology is completely reshaping medicine. Having contributed to publishing a study on using Virtual Reality (VR) for anatomy education, I have seen firsthand how immersive tech can make complex concepts easier to understand and practice safely. AI and modern tech are not here to replace doctors, but to make us better and to enhance patient care. In medical education, it creates interactive, personalized learning. In daily practice, AI can handle heavy data analysis and help spot patterns, freeing up doctors to focus on what matters most: spending time with the patient and providing empathetic care.

How have leadership, communication, and event hosting shaped your personality?

Stepping into leadership roles and frequently hosting major health and technology events as a Master of Ceremonies has been just as important as my clinical training. These experiences forced me out of the library and took me away from my comfort zone. They taught me how to communicate complex medical ideas in simple terms, how to act under pressure, and how to speak confidently in public. It taught me that a great doctor cannot just be good with information; you must be an excellent communicator and a strong leader as well.

What challenges did you face, and how did you balance studies, research, and extracurriculars?

The biggest challenge was time management. Medical school alone is exhausting and time-consuming, so adding international research, leadership roles, and public speaking sometimes felt overwhelming. I managed this by treating my time like a budget. I prioritized tasks strictly, stayed organized, and made sure to protect my personal time, like playing tennis to clear my head. It wasn't about finding more time but being fully present in whatever I was doing.

What advice would you give to students who aspire to engage in research and achieve excellence?

My biggest advice is, do not wait for the perfect opportunity; go out and create it. Find a mentor whose work inspires you, ask questions, and do not be afraid to start small. I never intended to be part of a research group in dermatology; it was only when I took initiative and expressed my interest in the field, that I got these opportunities. Excellence does not happen overnight; it comes from consistency and being curious about the things around you. Most importantly, do not put yourself in a box. You can be a brilliant student, an innovative researcher, and a great leader at all at the same time. Trust your abilities, stay curious, and enjoy the process.