

Msheireb Museums and Sidra Medicine host Science Café on Autism on the sidelines of the AutismTech Conference



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Doha, Qatar – 15 April 2025: Msheireb Museums and Sidra Medicine, entities of Qatar

Foundation, presented the second session of the popular Science Café Series on Monday at Bin

Jelmood House. Titled “Autism and Neurodiversity: From Breakthroughs to Real-Life Journeys,” the session was specifically arranged to coincide with World Autism Month and the AutismTech Conference hosted by Hamad Bin Khalifa University.

The Science Café session included international experts from the AutismTech Conference, and examined evolutionary approaches in autism research, diagnosis, and support. It featured two panel discussions: “The Power of Genomics in Diagnostics,” examining how genetic research is enhancing autism diagnosis and treatment, and “AI, Technology, and the Future of Healthcare,” focusing on how artificial intelligence and emerging technologies are reshaping autism assessment and intervention strategies.

Dr. Sahar Da’as, Research Manager at Sidra Medicine and founder of the Science Café series, shared a deeply personal reflection during the event. “As a mother of a teenager with autism, this session held profound significance for me. It is both humbling and empowering to witness global experts gathering here in Qatar to exchange insights and inspire action. Our focus on genomics, technology, and real-life journeys is not just about science – it’s about reshaping futures. To see research transforming into hope and practical change for families like mine is the most meaningful progress of all.”

Abdulla Al Naama, General Manager of Msheireb Museums, emphasised the significance of hosting events aligned with Qatar Foundation initiatives. “Through our partnership with Sidra Medicine and support for the AutismTech Conference, Science Café provides a valuable platform where experts and the public engage in meaningful discussions. We are proud to extend the reach of the conference’s scientific innovations to broader audiences, supporting Qatar Foundation’s vision for education and community development. By providing a platform for these critical discussions between global leaders and local communities, Msheireb Museums continues to fulfil its role in enhancing understanding and improving lives. This session demonstrates how cultural institutions can effectively complement scientific forums while promoting social inclusion.”

The two panels at Science Cafe featured prominent speakers including Dr Stephen Kanne, Director of the Centre for Autism and the Developing Brain and Professor at Weill Cornell Medicine; Dr Mohammed Aldosari, Paediatric Neurologist and Director of the Centre for Paediatric Neurosciences at Cleveland Clinic; Dr Connie Kasari, Distinguished Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, Los Angeles; Dr Stephen Scherer, Chief of Research at SickKids; Dr Alia Satti, Attending Physician in Developmental Pediatrics at Sidra Medicine; Christopher Banks, President and CEO of the Autism Society of America; Dr Qazi Fazli Azeem, Assistant Professor at Al Akhawayn University; and Mursi Seraj, Technology Advocate at MADA

Centre.

Prof. Khalid Fakhro, Chief Research Officer at Sidra Medicine, who also spoke at the AusTech Conference said: “Sidra Medicine is building unique programmes around personalised medicine, leveraging its complementary strengths in advanced research capabilities and excellent clinical care. This is the approach with our BARAKA-Qatar study, built as a collaborative initiative between multiple institutions to advance Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) research across the MENA region. Our Science Café series, as well as the AutismTech conference, provide an opportunity to showcase such multidisciplinary programmes from Qatar-based institutions, and to build collaborations with global partners which position Qatar as a leading international hub for research and innovation in Autism care going forward.”

The 2025 Science Café Series will continue to align and support Qatar Foundation’s mission to advance knowledge and community awareness. Future sessions of the series will cover topics including AI in precision medicine, community health, wellness care, and rare genetic conditions.

For more information about Science Café and to register for upcoming sessions, please visit

www.sidra.org.