

*WCMC-Q students Sanah Sadiq, Arnab Chowdhury and Abdulhadi Al Saei, tutored by faculty member Dr. Pablo Rodríguez del Pozo receive an Undergraduate Research Experience Program grant*

### **Down Syndrome in Qatar: A Survey of Public Perception and Educational Resources**

WCMC-Q premedical students Sanah Sadiq, Arnab Chowdhury and Abdulhadi Al Saei, and faculty member Dr. Pablo Rodríguez del Pozo, have received an Undergraduate Research Experience Program grant from the Qatar National Research Fund, to analyze public perceptions and educational resources available for children with Down Syndrome (DS) in Qatar.

According to previous studies, 150 children were diagnosed with DS in Qatar between 2000 and 2005, with a prevalence rate of 19.5 per 10,000 live births. Anecdotal evidence consistently suggests that, despite government efforts, there is a shortage of specialized support for families and educational services for children with DS in Qatar. In addition, families complain that social attitudes towards these children are often marked by little knowledge regarding the nature of the condition, the needs of the children with that condition and, above all, the importance of early stimulation and education of these children and their families in fostering integration and development of meaningful family and social roles.

Dr. del Pozo and his students' project is aimed at producing data to estimate the magnitude and causes of the gap between the needs of children with DS and their families and the services actually available to them. The study will, at the same time, look into the perceptions of the public about the needs and potential of children with Down syndrome, producing information that will show the level of public awareness of those issues, which will contribute to suggest ways to educate the public.

The study will take 10 months to complete and the grant will cover direct expenditures and costs of publication, as well as a small stipend for the students. The Undergraduate Research Experience Program, run by Qatar Foundation's Qatar National Research Fund, is aimed at introducing students into the rigorous habits, methodologies and ethics of research. It supports students' research projects of scientific value and that are focused on areas that need priority attention in Qatar. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis, according to scientific merit and to the quality of the mentorship plan proposed.