

Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Fireworks light the sky during celebrations of the opening of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat (More pics on Page 4)

Special Report

CO-FOUNDER TELLS HOW FSRI EVOLVED INTO INSTITUTION THAT PROVIDES HOLISTIC, MULTIDISCIPLINARY SERVICES

'RunQ8' grown to become a much anticipated annual charity event in Kuwait'

KUWAIT: The following is an interview with Dr Elham Al-Hamdan, Co-Founder, President and Medical Director of Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Institute (FSRI):

Question: When was the Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Institute established, and what is the Institute's goal?

Dr Hamdan: Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Institute (FSRI) opened its doors in 2006. Originally our mission was to provide specialized physiotherapy services, as we had noticed that this was missing within the county's healthcare landscape. However we quickly realized that there was a greater and deeper need within the community for comprehensive medical services and interdisciplinary care. From that point, our mission developed quickly and organically, and we grew to become a holistic medical institution that provides high quality, multidisciplinary services. Our approach has always been focused on integrated and multi-disciplinary care, and over the years we have grown the practice, venturing into speech and language therapy, psychology, family medicine, cardiology and nutrition. Across all our departments and areas of specialty, we still maintain our dedication to an integrated, patient-focused approach. We are also focused on serving as a regional hub for health and wellness, research, education and advocacy.

Question: How does FSRI operate as a non-profit Institute?

Dr Hamdan: FSRI was established and continues to operate as a non-profit institute; till this day, FSRI is the only organization of its kind in Kuwait. All the money that is generated at the Institute - through its departments, community outreach and fundraising efforts - is reinvested back into the organization. The funds are then used to cover running costs and expenses, invest in expansion and development, and help provide treatment to patients with limited financial means. They are also used to drive our numerous public health education, research and advocacy programs.

Question: Why did you start a separate children's center?

Dr Hamdan: We opened the Children Evaluation and Rehabilitation Center (CERC) in 2013 to help us provide the highest quality specialized care possible for children. Our goal from the outset was to provide assessment, treatment and interventions for children, to enable them to live the most independent life possible regardless of their conditions. Due to the number of children we were seeing, and the unique needs they have, it was only natural for us to set up a separate facility dedicated to best serve the needs of the pediatric population.

Our team of pediatric specialists provides com-

prehensive therapy programs for babies, children and young adults across a number of areas; this includes physical therapy, speech pathology, counseling and occupational therapy. We offer specialized and comprehensive therapy for children with a range of complex needs and conditions, including children without a formal diagnosis, who might also benefit from CERC's services. One-to-one and group sessions are available, as well as complete assessments and treatments out of the center for children with special cases.

RunQ8

Question: Tell us about RunQ8. When did it start, and what was the motivation behind it?

Dr Hamdan: We started RunQ8 back in 2010 with the support and backing of Agility, the race's founding partner and oldest supporter. When it began, RunQ8 was a small charity race, but it has grown to become one of the most anticipated annual charity sporting events in Kuwait, attracting more than 1800 participants last year. It has also become a landmark local initiative providing support for children with disabilities in Kuwait.

Initially, we created RunQ8 as a community initiative to drive awareness about different issues. For the first two years of the race, we had partnered with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior to raise awareness and money for the issues of eye health and traffic safety respectively. During this time, we were seeing an increasing number of children at our clinic that required rehabilitative care. Some of the treatment required by the children we treat is highly specialized and complex, due to the nature of their condition and the need for long-term, multi-disciplinary care. Unfortunately, this meant that many families often found themselves unable to afford the necessary treatment. Therefore, for the past four years, RunQ8 has been used as a platform to raise awareness and funds for CERC, supporting the center and providing subsidized, and sometimes free, treatment for families facing financial difficulties.

Through the funds raised from RunQ8, last year we were able to treat 20% of the children for free and provide subsidized treatment for 60% of the children treated at CERC. The raised funds have also enabled us to continue to grow and enhance the quality of care we provide, providing the means to do a number of things, including: purchase more specialized equipment; employ specialized staff- who treat patients and also train other clinicians within our organization and from the local healthcare community; set up a specialized



Dr Elham Al-Hamdan

media treatment room thanks to the support and funds provided by Burgan Bank; develop a volunteer program; and even develop patient education platforms - including a YouTube channel and an ongoing Medical Diwaniya program.

Question: Is this year's race any different? And is the race open to everyone?

Dr Hamdan: We are very excited about this year's race as it is the first time we are offering a 5 km chipped distance. For those eager to do a long distance event in the future, this is a great way to ease into it and prepare to do 10 km next year. We also have introduced a master's category for participants aged 55 and over; this is especially significant as we are hoping to promote awareness of healthy ageing. While we have a great base of avid runners and competitive athletes who come out and support us every year, RunQ8 is also a fun run and walk that anyone can partake in. Regardless of your background, age or fitness level, you can participate in the event and help raise awareness and funds for an important cause, and you don't even need to cross the finish line. It is simply a great day for individuals and families to come together, enjoy themselves and be a part of a community initiative. Registration is now open for the two distances, 5km and 10km, and participants can sign up via the official website (runq8.org). You can also call FSRI (at 25720338 or 25721757) for more information, or follow @runq8official and @fsri on Instagram to get the latest news and updates.

Initiatives

Question: On a final note, can you tell us what research and community initiatives does FSRI participate in?

Dr Hamdan: FSRI is highly active within the thriving civic society in Kuwait, often partnering with many other non-profits and NGOs in the country who share similar goals and values. The Institute maintains a rich and diverse program of community initiatives, which aims to raise awareness and rally support for a myriad of topics affecting our society - including children's rehabilitation, health and wellness, preventative medicine, women's health and much more. Some of FSRI's initiatives include free lectures, training programs and workshop, a number of educational social media channels, and much more. Our goal through all these initiatives is to increase public awareness about the most pressing health concerns in Kuwait, and to empower the local community with the necessary knowledge to enable them to live healthier lives.

We also strive to be a regional hub for healthcare education and research. FSRI also supports local researchers and clinicians, by working together and making low cost training available throughout the year, in order to build the capacity of health care providers in Kuwait. We also carry out a number of clinical research efforts and clinical studies focusing on key healthcare issues in Kuwait, in order to support evidence-based practice in the country.