

Arabian Gulf University College of Medicine and Medical Sciences

By Ala' Aldin Al Hussaini

The Arabian Gulf University is a regional university established in 1982 by the following Arab states: Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Its purpose is to strengthen co-operation and reinforce the efforts of these countries in the fields of development, higher education and scientific research, and to contribute towards the political, economic and social life of the region by bringing together students and staff from all the participating countries.

The University is committed to the development of innovative approaches to education and to the orientation of its programmes towards the needs of the region. The educational philosophy places particular emphasis on the development of independent thinking, self learning and problem solving.

Colleges of Education, Science and Medicine & Medical Sciences have been planned. The college of Medicine & Medical Sciences is the only college so far established.

The Arabian Gulf University is expected to make its main contribution in postgraduate education and research.

The College is being planned for an undergraduate intake of 100 when fully developed. The academic staff and students are to be accommodated in a substantial five storey building adjacent to the Salmaniya Medical Centre (600 beds), which is the principal teaching hospital for the school. Clinical facilities available within Bahrain also include the Military Hospital (200 beds) and the fourteen Health Centres run by the Ministry of Health.

Hospital and public facilities within each of the participating states are also expected to be used for undergraduate education.

The Foundation Dean of the Arabian Gulf University College of Medicine, Dr. Ala Aldin Al Hussaini, formerly Dean of the College of Medicine, Baghdad University, took up his appointment in October 1982. Ten full time and fourteen half time (clinical) academic staff have been appointed to date.

The curriculum is based on broad concepts of public health. The programme is intended to prepare students adequately for a future career in preventive, curative or rehabilitative medicine. Students will therefore obtain experience in both hospitals and health centres and will be expected to learn about environmental effects on health as well as disease pathology in individuals. The curriculum will concentrate on medical problems that are important in the Arabian Gulf region and will emphasise the development of skills in diagnosis and management of illness within the context of the health team. Students will be expected to take account of the effect of illness not only upon the patient but also upon the family and society.

In developing its curriculum, the College of Medicine is drawing widely on the experience of other medical schools in community oriented and problem based learning. Some familiarity with the curricula of McMaster, Newcastle (Australia) or other similar schools would be of particular benefit.

The programme of undergraduate study extends for seven years, including two pre-medical years. After completion of this programme graduates will be subject to the registration requirements of the sponsoring countries. In most cases, they will be expected or required to enter their health services for a period of years.

The Arabian Gulf University's Charter re-emphasises its role in post-graduate education. It is therefore expected that the College of Medicine will develop a regional role in both clinical speciality training and in post-graduate research training in the medical sciences.

The Library is planned to be the major centre for medically related book and journal holdings in Bahrain and will be available to medical and other health professional staff in the Ministry of Health, as well as staff of the University. The Library is planned to accommodate 20,000 monographs. Approximately 450 serial titles are on order or already in stock and the serials list is expected to grow to nearly 700. Additionally, it is intended that the Library will develop substantial holdings of audio and video tape cassettes, slides and other audio visual material. The collection is being designed to support the College's role in post graduate education as well as in undergraduate teaching.

The library is fully computerised. Readers access catalogue information via a computer terminal. The system is designed to be as easy as possible to operate and can assist readers in conducting catalogue searches. Medline and other external data bases are accessible by telephone. There is an inter-library loan service.

Comprehensive backruns of major medical journals are being acquired on microfiche.

The AGUMC is visualised as a centre for research and post graduate education in the medical sciences. In keeping with this vision, the new building has been provided with more than 100 laboratories, suitable for research in anatomy, physiology, bio-chemistry, microbiology, pharmacology and related disciplines. Although special laboratories are included for equipment demanding unusual facilities, such as electron microscopes, and

some laboratories are being outfitted for extraordinary purposes, such as handling high activity radioisotopes or maintaining cultures of human cells, most of the research areas are provided with standard work-benches and services which will be adaptable to a variety of different research activities. One objective of the AGUMC is to foster inter-disciplinary blocks, with anatomy in one wing, biochemistry in another and microbiology somewhere else. Rather, it is hoped that researchers with similar interests will be located in the same general area, regardless of what disciplines they might represent. At present, standard laboratory equipment (glassware, centrifuges, microscopes, etc.) is being purchased for outfitting about 20 laboratories with all the items necessary for initiating basic research programmes. As the faculty grows, this process will be extended to additional laboratories, with modifications to meet any special demands which develop.