

Autism awareness walk held in Tehran



IRNA – An Autism Awareness Walk was recently held around Chitgar Lake in Tehran with the aim of raising awareness about autism spectrum disorder (ASD) within society. This event was sponsored by members of the autism community in Iran who took on the expenses of the walk as part of their social responsibility. The next Autism Awareness Walk is scheduled to take place in March 2024, coinciding with World Autism Awareness Month, which officially begins on April 2. Families of individuals with autism face the lifelong responsibility of providing constant support and care for their loved ones. Unfortunately, these parents often find themselves in situations where they have to apologize for their children's unintentional behaviors due to a lack of understanding and awareness about autism among those around them. Towards the end of the autism walking event, family members of autistic adults took the opportunity to address the general public, emphasizing the importance of improving public awareness and understanding of the unique behaviors displayed by individuals with autism.

Iran ready to produce med products with Libya

IRNA – Iran's Food and Drug Administration (IFDA) head, Heidar Mohammadi, announced Iran's readiness to produce joint health products with Libya during a meeting with Libya's deputy minister of health, Azzam al-Hadi Omar, in Tehran. According to the senior official at IFDA, Iran is self-sufficient in the production of medicines, medical equipment, food products, cosmetics, and formula. Additionally, Tehran is prepared to collaborate in the production of vaccines, medicines, and other health products, while also offering technology transfer in the healthcare industry to Libya. During the meeting, Deputy Minister of Health in International Affairs, Mohammad Hossein Niknam, emphasized the global significance of healthcare and expressed Tehran's willingness to enhance cooperation in the field of health with Libya. Niknam further highlighted the potential for Iran and Libya to expand their collaboration in joint medicine production, medical equipment, medical research, and medical education.

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Low tariffs are Iranian healthcare's Achilles' heel

Social Desk

Medicine is a highly esteemed academic field in Iran, with numerous aspiring teenagers dreaming of becoming doctors. However, the path to becoming a doctor is rigorous and selective. Only a fraction of candidates who take the national university entrance exam are ultimately accepted into medical schools. After completing the seven-year general medicine course and passing the necessary exams, doctors enter specialized fields, requiring an additional four to five years of training before practicing medicine in their chosen specialty. Despite the challenges doctors face in entering and excelling in specialized fields, medical tariffs have failed to keep pace with inflation or reflect their hard work. As a result, many positions in specialized fields remain vacant each year, compelling some doctors to

turn to cosmetic work for higher earnings, while others opt to migrate abroad. The income disparity between doctors in the public and private sectors further exacerbates the issue, creating an imbalance within the healthcare system.

Dr. Reza Jabbari, a distinguished neurologist, offers insights into this pressing issue. When asked about his motivation to pursue a career in medicine, he shares his personal experience, stressing his deep interest in neurosurgery from a young age. He attended medical school at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences and pursued neurosurgery at Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences.

Jabbari is also known for his charitable work, providing free-of-charge treatment to deprived areas. He has taken numerous trips to regions such as Lali, Andika, and Haftkel in Masjed Soleyman, where he has conducted charitable treatment programs. Over the years, Jabbari has formed a community called Imam Reza (PBUH) with young specialist doctors who share the spirit of charity.



● IRNA

Regarding the declining desire of doctors to remain in the public sector and university hospitals, the neurologist identifies income disparity, unfair payment mechanisms, and delayed payments as major factors. He emphasizes the urgent need for cooperation between the Ministry of Health, the Health Commission of the Parliament, and other responsible entities to resolve these issues and restore balance to the healthcare system.

Disturbingly, recent statistics reveal that over 6,000 doctors emigrated from Iran last year. This

exodus raises concerns, as neighboring countries entice Iranian doctors and specialists with attractive salaries. The Persian Gulf countries, in particular, are trying to position themselves as regional treatment hubs, competing with developed nations. The Ministry of Health, as the leading entity in the healthcare system, must urgently devise a fundamental solution to this problem to prevent further damage.

Jabbari further underlines the severe consequences of inadequate medical service tariffs, including long queues at public hospitals

and clinics, which deprive people of high-quality and timely medical services. If left unaddressed, these problems will continue to weaken the overall health and treatment system. However, with coordinated efforts among various components of the health system and the implementation of decisive actions, these issues can be mitigated.

The disparity in medical tariffs in Iran poses a significant threat to the healthcare system, leading to a decline in doctors' desire to remain in the public sector and university hospitals. The income

imbalance and delayed payments have resulted in dissatisfaction and demotivation among doctors. As a consequence, many doctors choose to migrate abroad, leaving crucial positions vacant. Urgent collaboration between the Ministry of Health, the Health Commission of the Parliament, and other responsible entities is essential to address these issues and restore balance to the healthcare system.

**This is a modified version of an interview with Dr. Reza Jabbari published on Tasnim News Agency.*

Daydreaming might serve a vital purpose

Daydreaming is looking less like a vice and more like a virtue the more that neuroscientists and psychologists dig into the phenomenon. Scientists at Harvard University have now found preliminary evidence that when mice "daydream" or quietly reflect on something they saw earlier that day, their brains are rewired in a useful way for memory and learning, Science Alert reported.

That hypothesis still needs to be tested in further experiments, but it seems that when mice are shown a black-and-white checkered pattern, they can still visualize the image in their mind's eye after it is removed from sight. This "daydream" effect, where the visual cortex is busy visualizing an image that is no longer there, only occurred when the mouse was un-

stimulated, in a calm and relaxed state with small pupils. It is this non-stimulated, dreamy state that scientists at Harvard think could have a similar effect to sleep, consolidating memories and improving learning.

"We wanted to know how this daydreaming process occurred on a neurobiological level, and whether these moments of quiet reflection could be important for learning and memory," explains neurobiologist Nghia Nguyen from Harvard University. The study included 13 mice, which

were

shown two different black-and-white images 64 times throughout the day for two seconds a piece in an otherwise non-stimulating environment. Over the course of several days, these experiments were repeated while the team at Harvard monitored the electrical activity of 7,000 neurons in the brains of eight of the mice, including nerve cells in its visual cortex and hippocampus – a region strongly associated with memory consolidation. Each of the two images ultimately triggered a different pattern of neural activity in the lateral visual cortex of the mice. This part of the brain is associated with object recognition and discerning the features

of shapes. The findings suggest that the mouse brain is encoding each image with a different pattern of neural activity. But what's really interesting is that after these images were replaced by a blank computer screen, the mouse visual cortex sometimes "reactivated", exciting a similar pattern of neurons to the removed image. This brief reactivation in the visual cortex was often coupled with sharp-wave ripples in the hippocampus – a sign that the brain was effectively encoding visual information despite the absence of a stimulus. Over time, brain activity upon seeing an image started to resemble brain activity when daydreaming about that image. This is a sign that daydreaming was strength-

ening some neuronal connections while weakening others, creating a more efficient stimulus response overall. "When you see two different images many times, it becomes important to discriminate between them," explains Nguyen. "Our findings suggest that daydreaming may guide this process by steering the neural patterns associated with the two images away from each other." The findings suggest that when the brain is not stimulated, it can slip off into an imagined world, where mental images can actively reorganize the brain's future responses to stimuli. Whether this also applies to human brains is unknown, but previous studies have shown that asking people to recall an image does increase brain activity in their visual cortex and hippocampus.

What's really interesting is that after these images were replaced by a blank computer screen, the mouse visual cortex sometimes reactivated.

