EDIA Spotlight

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY | FACULTY OF MEDICINE Office of Community Engagement

Interprofessional Health Iftar Fosters Community, Belonging, and Inclusive Practice in the Multifaith Prayer Room

By: Said Msabaha

On March 6, the 17th day of Ramadhan, the new Multifaith Prayer Room in the Tupper Building was warm and vibrant as learners, staff, and community members gathered for an Interprofessional Health Iftar. The event brought together learners from the Faculties of Medicine, Health, and Dentistry, celebrating community, connection, and the EDIA values that guide the Faculty of Medicine.

The evening opened at sunset with Maghrib prayer, marking the end of the daily fast, followed by a shared meal. The Iftar was coordinated by the Office of Community Engagement, in consultation with Muslim medical students, and hosted by Said Msabaha, Co-Director, EDIA and Manager, PLANS, reflecting the faculty's ongoing emphasis on equity-advancing learner supports, partnerships and events.

Understanding Ramadhan

Ramadhan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, typically lasts 29 or 30 days depending on the moon sighting. Many Muslims observe this period through fasting, reflection, prayer, and ethical living. From dawn to sunset, adult Muslims abstain from food and drink as an act of spiritual discipline and mindfulness. For many, fasting cultivates compassion, gratitude, generosity, and empathy for those experiencing food insecurity.

Fasting is not required for everyone. Exemptions include individuals who are ill, pregnant or breastfeeding, travelling, elderly, managing chronic health conditions, or children who have not reached puberty, reflecting ethical principles that prioritize health, dignity, and wellbeing. Ramadhan concludes with Eid al-Fitr, a celebratory holiday marked by communal prayer, acts of charity, and gatherings with family and friends.

Interprofessional learning and a shared space that supports belonging

Participants included learners across Medicine, Health, and Dentistry, from Community Health and Epidemiology and Med 1-4 to PharmD, Dentistry, and Dental Hygiene, alongside staff and community members. Coming together across programs strengthened interprofessional relationships and reinforced the importance of inclusive learning environments in health professional education.

Students shared how meaningful it is to have a dedicated space in the Tupper Building to pray and break the fast. Many expressed appreciation for the new Multifaith Prayer Room, which supports accessible participation in all religious practices and enables learners to observe Ramadhan with dignity within a demanding academic environment. This intentional focus on accessible space and scheduling aligns with the faculty's broader commitment to remove barriers across both the built and learning environments.

A PharmD student observed that the prayer room in the Tupper building (Sir Charles Tupper Building, Basement – Room BC1) allows her to pray and still reach class on time, showing how inclusive, accessible infrastructure advances learner well-being and academic success. This aligns with the Faculty of Medicine's Anti-Oppression Policy and EDIA commitments to dignity, respect, and the removal of barriers in both the built and learning environments, ensuring full participation for all learners (see Dalhousie Faculty of Medicine Anti-Oppression Policy, Sept 2024).

This Interprofessional Health Iftar illustrates the faculty's ongoing work to build accessible, inclusive learning environments in partnership with our community. With EDIA principles guiding this effort, we remain committed to fostering equity, belonging, and culturally responsive practice across programs and spaces.

Acknowledgement

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