

# HEYHAN –

## FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Welcome to the sixth edition of *Heyhan*. We have some exciting articles for you, including staff developments and a deeper insight into the experiences of pursuing a career at MNU. We have also introduced a section for “Picture Gallery”, where you will find all the pictures for events highlighted in this edition.

### GRADUATION NEWS



We are proud to share that 36 students graduated in the April 2026 ceremony from the following disciplines:

- Bachelor of Counseling
- Bachelor of Psychology
- Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Sciences
- Bachelor of Primary Health Care
- Master in Public Health
- Master of Science in Psychology (Clinical)

Congratulations to all our graduates on this significant achievement!

### KEY HIGHLIGHT - SCALE-11

An initiative focused on strengthening antimicrobial surveillance and stewardship in the Maldives.

#### INTRODUCTION

An initiative focused on strengthening antimicrobial surveillance and stewardship in the Maldives.

SCALE (Strengthening Healthcare Workforce capacity through global learning) is a grant scheme of the NHS England that builds partnerships, facilitates collaborative learning and exchange between UK and overseas healthcare organizations.

SCALE-11: A collaborative initiative between Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHCT) and the the the Maldives National University (MNU) aimed at strengthening antimicrobial surveillance and stewardship in the Maldives

The project outcomes are aligned with the WHO Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance(AMR) and the Maldives National AMR Action Plan (2024-2029). SCALE- 11 seeks to strengthen Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) and surveillance mechanisms for healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and promote antimicrobial stewardship at the healthcare facility level through continuous medical education (CME) programs and action research.

#### TEAM BEHIND ‘HEYHAN’

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:**  
Dr. Aishath Shanoora

**EDITORS:**  
Aminath Samha  
Zeenath Shakir  
Fathimath Maeesha

**DESIGN:**  
Aminath Samha

**CONTRIBUTORS:**  
Fathimath Nahula  
Fathimath Zimna  
Shifaza Adam Shareef



Follow us 



WHY THE PROJECT MATTERS

AMR and IPC are global public health priorities and critical components of resilient health systems. Strengthening IPC practices and antimicrobial stewardship is essential to reducing healthcare-associated infections, improving patient safety, and preserving the effectiveness of life-saving antimicrobial agents. The project's expected outcomes directly support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and align with the Maldives' national priorities for health system strengthening and the National Action Plan on AMR. The primary contribution is to SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being, and is linked with SDG 6, SDG 8, SDG 9, SDG 12, and SDG 17.

AREAS OF WORK AND KEY MILESTONES

The first phase of the project is being implemented at Hulhumale’ Hospital in association with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Maldives Food and Drug Authority (MFDA). The key areas of work are aligned with strategic objectives 4,5 & 6 of NAP-AMR that include:

- 1.Develop an educational module and training programme and implement the study pack in the target institution(s) with continuous engagement, combining teaching and academic coaching elements to drive continuous improvement.
- 2.Antimicrobial Stewardship Program: There is ongoing work to analyze laboratory data using R programming to develop cumulative antibiograms and monitor AMR trends. The project will explore pathways for AI-enabled analytics to strengthen the sustainability of surveillance systems. The findings will inform evidence-based empirical treatment guidelines and support effective antimicrobial stewardship at the target institutions.
- 3.Visit to Northumbria: January 2026: A delegation from the Maldives comprising six lecturers from the Department of Medical Sciences, one Emergency Room Medical Officer, and one Registered Nurse visited Northumbria as part of the project. The study visit provided a range of shadowing and observational learning opportunities.
- 4.The Global Point Prevalence Survey (Global-PPS) Inpatient Module was conducted in Hulhumale’ Hospital from 23rd June – 25th June, and report iteration, identification of key interventions, and dissemination work are ahead of us. The survey results capture data on antimicrobial prescribing practices, AMR patterns, and the burden of healthcare-associated infections in inpatient wards.

PARTICIPANT REFLECTIONS FROM HULHUMALÉ HOSPITAL:



**Fathimath Wafaa, Clinical Nurse, Hulhumale’ Hospital**  
“It was a privilege to participate in the Northumbria NHS visit. The warm hospitality, genuine kindness, and unwavering support from everyone across the Northumbria Trust made this a truly memorable experience. The opportunity to visit different departments, learn from dedicated professionals, and exchange knowledge was both inspiring and valuable. Thank you for your warm welcome, for your generosity in sharing your experiences, and for your commitment to collaboration. It was a heartwarming experience that I will always appreciate”



**Rafaahath Rameez, IPC Committee member, Hulhumale’ Hospital**  
“Being part of the SCALE Project has been a valuable and enriching experience for Hulhumalé Hospital. The collaboration with the MNU and the Northumbria NHS team has strengthened our understanding of IPC, AMR surveillance, and antimicrobial stewardship practices. Although the GPPS was new to our team, the training and guidance provided were well-organized, practical, and easy to follow, making the implementation process smooth. We believe this project is an important step towards strengthening IPC and AMR practices, improving antibiotic stewardship, and enhancing patient safety and quality care. This partnership has been a truly positive experience, and we are grateful for the opportunity to be part of such an impactful initiative. On behalf of Hulhumalé Hospital, sincere appreciation and heartfelt thanks to the SCALE team for their dedication and support”

REFLECTIONS FROM NORTHUMBRIA HEALTHCARE NHS FOUNDATION TRUST:

**Heather Lawson, Senior Infection Prevention and Control Nurse**



“I have thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with the team from the Maldives. Being involved in a project with the potential to improve patient safety and the overall delivery of care has been both rewarding and inspiring. Throughout the partnership, both teams have contributed significantly to each other's areas of work. By sharing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives, we have all gained valuable insights. The team from Northumbria now has a much greater awareness of the global challenges surrounding infection prevention and control (IPC) and antimicrobial prescribing, as well as the importance of adapting approaches to different healthcare settings.

The impact of this global partnership on the NHS extends beyond the project's immediate outcomes. It has strengthened our understanding of global health issues, encouraged the exchange of best practice, and highlighted the shared responsibility we all have in tackling antimicrobial resistance. The collaboration has also fostered professional development, enhanced cultural awareness, and created opportunities for ongoing learning and future international partnerships. Ultimately, the knowledge and experience gained through this collaboration will contribute to improving patient safety, supporting antimicrobial stewardship, and enhancing the quality of care delivered within the NHS”

**Scott Barret, Lead Clinical Pharmacist**



“The partnership between Northumbria Healthcare and our colleagues in the Maldives has been an incredibly positive and rewarding experience. From the outset, the collaboration was built on mutual respect, shared goals, and a commitment to improving patient care through strengthened antimicrobial stewardship. A key strength of the partnership has been the genuine exchange of knowledge and expertise between both teams. By working closely together, sharing experiences, and learning from one another’s healthcare systems and approaches, we have developed a strong and supportive professional relationship. This has enabled both organisations to gain valuable insights, challenge current ways of working, and identify practical solutions that can be adapted to different healthcare settings.

For the Northumbria team, the partnership has provided a greater understanding of the unique challenges faced within the Maldives in relation to antimicrobial resistance, while also highlighting the innovation, dedication, and resilience of colleagues working within different resource environments. The impact of this partnership extends well beyond the project's specific objectives. It has fostered lasting relationships, enhanced cultural awareness, and created a platform for ongoing learning and future collaboration”

**Joseph Brayson, Lead Clinical Pharmacist for Infections & Antimicrobial Stewardship**



AMR is one of the biggest health threats we face in modern medicine and affects all corners of the globe; this presents a unique opportunity to join with colleagues all around the world and work together to fight against the rising tide of AMR. It has been a privilege to work with colleagues from MNU and healthcare institutes around the Maldives to share practices and experiences. I have been inspired by the team’s passion and dedication to improve healthcare for patients in the Maldives and look forward to working together to continue to grow our project.

REFLECTIONS FROM MINISTRY OF HEALTH, MALDIVES :

**Uza. Thasleema Usman, Commissioner of Quality Assurance**



“As antimicrobial resistance (AMR) remains a major global health threat, strengthening infection prevention and control (IPC) and antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) is a national priority. Through the SCALE project, Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and the Maldives are collaborating to build sustainable models by sharing technical expertise to strengthen IPC and AMS programmes.

The project promotes sustainability through measuring baseline data with continuous monitoring, regular feedback, and quality improvement using the Global Point Prevalence Survey (GPPS) and other surveillance tools. While currently implemented at Hulhumalé Hospital, I envision SCALE becoming a model for nationwide adoption, with its lessons and best practices progressively replicated across healthcare institutions in the Maldives”

# RESEARCH AT FHS

We are pleased to share that 1 research project successfully secured funding under the National Research Fund: Emerging Research Grants (NRF-ERG)

- Team: Dr. Mohamed Sam-aan Hussain (Principal Investigator), Dr. Shazla Mohamed, Dr. Aishath Shaheen Ismail, Dr. Asma Ibrahim Sulaiman, Dr. Aishath Niyaf, and Mohamed Zaid
  - Title: “Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Regarding Tuberculosis Screening and Diagnosis Among the Working-Age Population in the Greater Male’ Area, Maldives: A Cross-Sectional Study” - NRF/ERG-2025-18

In addition, we have 15 ongoing research projects.

- Team: Fathimath Maeesha (Author) and Aminath Samha (Co-Author)
  - Title: "Vilun" - UBG-2024-C1-L-06
- Team: Aminath Samha (Principal Investigator), Fathimath Maeesha, Fathimath Nahula, Mariyam Neerish, and Zeenath Shakir
  - Title: “Eco-Anxiety and Climate Change Attitudes: A Study of Young Adults in the Maldives at the Maldives National University” - RR/2026/24
- Team: Mariyam Neerish (Principal Investigator), Zeenath Shakir, and Unaisa Saud
  - Title: “Behind the Prison Walls: Stress, Burnout, and Overall Health and Well-being of Corrections Officers in the Maldives” - URG-2022-M-AS04
- Team: Mariyam Neerish (Principal Investigator), Zeenath Shakir, Fathimath Maeesha, and Aminath Samha
  - Title: “Relapse Realities: Unpacking the Factors behind Substance Use Recurrence in the Maldives” - URG-2024-C2-M-11
- Team: Fathimath Nahula (Principal Investigator), Dr. Aishath Shanoora, and Dr. Rachel Singt Kiat
  - “A Mixed-methods Study on the Needs and Training Efficacy of Clinical Supervision in the Maldives” - RE/2025/B-26
- Team: Mohamed Zaid (Principal Investigator), Dr. Aishath Niyaf, Dr. Mohamed Sam-aan, Dr. Razana Faiz, Dr. Ibrahim Afzal, Jeehan Mahmood, and Ismail Azzam Wajeeth
  - Title: “Prevalence and Risk Factors of Cardiovascular Disease Among Maldivian Adults: A Cross-sectional Study” - URG-2025-C2-M-12
- Team: Dr. Asma Ibrahim Suleiman (Principal Investigator), Dr. Aishath Niyaf, Mohamed Zaid, Aishath Hassan, Shifaza Adam Shareef, and Shaheeb Abdul Azeez
  - Title: “Cancer Prevalence and Associated Risk Factors in Greater Malé Area” - URG-2024-C1-L-AS12
- Team: Dr. Aishath Niyaf (Principal Investigator), Mohamed Zaid, Dr. Aishath Niyaf, Dr. Asma Ibrahim Suleiman, Zahudha Abdul Azeez, Aishath Hassan, and Dr. Mohamed Sam-aan
  - Title: “Effectiveness of an Educational Intervention on Breast Cancer Screening Behaviour among Women in Malé Region, Maldives” - URG-2024-C1-L-AS07
- Team: Zahudha Abdul Azeez (Author)
  - Title: “Verses of Life: A Mixed-Theme Poetry Collection” - UBG-2023 C2-M-01
- Team: Aishath Hassan (Principal Investigator), Ibrahim Nishan Ahmed, Mohamed Hamzath, and Hussain Maniu
  - Title: “Investigating Factors Contributing to Low Enrolment in Public Health Courses at the Maldives National University: Perspectives of Secondary School Graduates and Key Stakeholders” - URG-2025-C2-M-02
- Team: Dr. Mohamed Sam-aan (Principal Investigator), Mohamed Zaid, Dr. Aishath Niyaf, Dr. Ibrahim Afzal, and Dr. Mohamed Shifan
  - Title: “A Cancer Profile of Breast, Thyroid, and Head & Neck Cancers at IGMH, Maldives: A Retrospective Analysis (2021-2025)” - URG-2025-C2-M-11
- Team: Shifaza Adam Shareef (Principal Investigator), Dr. Mariyam Suzana, Dr. Abdul Azeez Hameed, and Dr. Shaistha Zubair
  - Title: “Knowledge and Attitude of General Immunization and Optional Vaccines Among Parents of Under-five Children in the Maldives: An Institution-based Cross-sectional Study” - URG-2019-M-AS10
- Team: Aishath Majidha Hassan (Principal Investigator), Aishath Maharath, Fathimath Shiranee, Fathimath Zimna, and Aishath Mazuda
  - Title: “Prevalence of Vitamin D Deficiency in females aged 18-35 years in Male’, Maldives” - URG-2024-C1-L-AS16
- Team: Fathimath Shiranee (Principal Investigator), Aishath Maharath, Fathimath Shiranee, Fathimath Zimna, and Aishath Mazuda
  - Title: “Prevalence of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs) among Health Workers of Addu Equatorial Hospital: Prevalence and Risk Factors”

# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2026, TERM 1

## FEBRUARY

- Feb 11 - A workplace-related mental health session was facilitated by our Dean, Dr. Aishath Shanoora, for the middle management staff at Dhigali Resort
- FHS Staff Club Ramadan Thashibari Movement - To celebrate the spirit of Ramadan, FHS staff initiated a Thashibari Movement. This meaningful initiative helps to build a stronger sense of community and generosity among the staff. It also reflected on the core values of compassion, unity and kindness while strengthening the bonds among the staff.

## MAY

- May 16-17 - Oevaru Conference - 3 Oral Presentations and 2 Poster Presentations were presented at the conference.



## JULY

- July 2 - A Research Sharing Session was held for the staff of the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) to provide updates on ongoing research projects within the faculty. The session served as a platform to exchange ideas, discuss the work done, and identify opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, fostering a stronger culture of research and innovation across the faculty.
- July 9 - To celebrate the successful completion of the academic term, staff came together for a fun-filled End-of-Term BBQ, the event gave everyone a chance to relax and enjoy each other's company outside the workplace.
- July 11 - HPA and FHS met to discuss educational pathways in public health, supporting the development of current staff and building a stronger public health workforce for the future.
- July 6-23 - The Measles Outbreak Response Immunization (ORI) for students and staff of MNU was conducted, with more than 60 MNU students and staff vaccinated.
- July 18 - A Geriatric session at Aged Care Maldives (with DMRC, Hulhumale' Hospital) was conducted, which focused on the assessment of fall risk and strategies for fall risk prevention for the elderly members at the NGO.
- July 19-23 - Sessions on building Well-being and Resilience to empower school children were facilitated as part of the MNU Mahasama.

## APRIL

- April 19-25 - Medical Laboratory Professionals Week 2026 was celebrated with multiple educational and interactive activities. Educational and awareness videos on infection prevention were shared on social media platforms. Creative competitions, including The Living Canvas - Agar Art Competition for FHS students and FHS/SN staff, and the Make Your Own Microbe Competition for students, showcased scientific creativity and innovation. The week's celebrations concluded with BMLS Night, bringing together BMLS students and lecturers for an evening of celebration, networking, and camaraderie.
- April 21 - MRC, in partnership with Australia Awards Alumni, MNU Thinadhoo Campus, and FHS, and supported by DFAT, successfully carried out a 3-day Supportive Communication Training and Practice Session for 21 residents of GDh. Thinadhoo.
- April 28 - We proudly celebrated the achievements of 61 outstanding students at the Dean's Award Ceremony. Special congratulations to the 2 students who achieved a perfect GPA of 4.0 — an exceptional accomplishment reflecting their hard work and dedication.



## JUNE

- June 16-18 - Dr. Mohamed Sam-aan Hussain participated in a regional initiative aimed at strengthening workforce capacity to implement Essential Public Health Functions (EPHFs) held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, in collaboration with MNU and HPA.



PICTURE GALLERY



NRF-ERG awarding



Mental Health Session at Dhigali Resort



FHS Staff Club Ramadan Thashibari Movement



Research sharing session



FHS Social Club BBQ



Meeting with HPA



Measles ORI week closing



MNU Mahasama



Geriatric session at Aged Care Maldives

# THE POWER OF VACCINES: PREVENTING THE RETURN OF DEADLY DISEASES

Written by: Shifaz Adam Shareef, Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Health



Vaccination is one of the greatest achievements in public health. Vaccines have saved millions of lives by preventing serious illnesses such as measles, polio, diphtheria, and whooping cough. Many of these diseases, once responsible for widespread death and disability, became rare because of successful immunization programs (WHO, 2024). However, declining vaccination rates and the spread of misinformation are increasing the risk of these diseases returning.

## HOW CAN WE ENSURE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

Vaccines work by strengthening the body’s immune system to recognize and fight harmful viruses and bacteria before they cause illness. In

addition to protecting individuals, vaccines also create herd immunity, where high vaccination coverage helps prevent the spread of diseases within communities. This protection is especially important for vulnerable groups such as infants, older adults, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems (CDC, 2024). While vaccines have successfully controlled many infectious diseases, maintaining high vaccination coverage helps prevent the return of diseases that were once common and deadly.

## THE RE-EMERGENCE OF VACCINE-PREVENTABLE DISEASES

Recent measles outbreaks reported in different countries have shown how easily vaccine-preventable diseases can spread when immunization coverage declines. Measles is highly contagious and may lead to pneumonia, brain inflammation, blindness, and even death (WHO, 2024). Similarly, cases of polio have reappeared in areas with low vaccination coverage, threatening decades of global progress toward eradication.

## THE GROWING CHALLENGE OF VACCINE MISINFORMATION

One of the major challenges facing immunization programmes today is vaccine misinformation. False information shared through social media and other platforms can create fear and uncertainty about vaccine safety. Scientific evidence consistently shows that vaccines are safe and effective. Therefore, it is essential for individuals to seek information from trusted sources such as healthcare professionals, public health authorities, and reputable health organizations.

The COVID-19 pandemic further demonstrated the importance of vaccination in reducing severe illness, hospitalizations, and deaths. Vaccination programs helped countries control the spread of the disease and protect healthcare systems from collapse. The pandemic reminded the world that prevention through vaccination is far safer and more effective than treating disease after outbreaks occur.

## VACCINATION IS A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

Vaccination is not only an individual responsibility but also a community responsibility. Every missed vaccine increases the risk of disease outbreaks and places vulnerable populations at risk. Protecting communities requires continued public awareness, strong immunization programs, and collective action.

In the Maldives, routine immunization programmes have played a vital role in protecting children and communities from vaccine-preventable diseases. Continued participation in national vaccination programmes is essential to maintain these achievements.

## TRUST SCIENCE, PROTECT THE FUTURE

Vaccines remain one of the most powerful tools for disease prevention. By staying up to date with recommended vaccinations and supporting evidence-based health information, we can prevent the return of deadly diseases and protect the health of future generations.

# PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN WORKPLACES

Written by: Fathimath Nahula, Senior Lecturer, Department of Behavioral Sciences

## WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

Psychological safety is a term initially coined by Carl Rogers in a paper titled ‘Towards the Theory of Creativity’. Rogers defined it as an environment grounded in unconditional worth, empathetic understanding, and free from external evaluations (Rogers, 1954). The term was then adopted by various other scholars in the context of organization, group dynamics, employee engagement, etc. However, the most influential empirical research in shaping the modern understanding came from Amy Edmondson’s paper ‘Psychological Safety and Learning Behaviour in Teams’. According to Edmondson (1999), psychological safety is a shared belief of an existing safe space for interpersonal risk-taking. The term, therefore, evolved from an individual condition for creativity into a collective belief central to team learning and organizational effectiveness.

## WHY IS PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IMPORTANT IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS?

Psychological safety is vital in university settings because it creates a conducive environment for both students and professionals to thrive. Empirical evidence indicates students demonstrate higher engagement, creativity, belongingness, reduced anxiety, and academic risk taking when psychological safety is ensured in university settings (Figueroa, 2026; Zhang & Akhtar, 2013 & Carmeli et al., 2014). Amongst staff, psychological safety fostered innovation, authenticity, trust, collaborative teaching, and curriculum innovation (Laird et al. 2024; Edmondson, 1999 & Luu et al., 2025). This dual evidence underscores its value as a foundational condition for both teaching and learning excellence in university settings.

## HOW CAN WE ENSURE PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY?

Research shows that encouraging open dialogue, modelling respectful leadership, peer mentoring, collaborative learning, and training in communication, empathy, and feedback practices are essential to strengthen psychological safety (Capezio et al., 2023; Liang, 2024 & Laird et al., 2024). Yet these practices are not alone sufficient. A reflective approach to practicing psychological safety is necessary. As educators, mentors, and colleagues, examining our behaviours, interactions, and bias are essential. Importantly, reflection should not remain a personal exercise but be embedded as an institutional tool to help identify blind spots, strengthen, and foster the development of more effective and collaborative teams.

## HOW DO WE EMBODY PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY IN TRAINING?

At allied health training facilities, where learning, understanding vulnerability, and shaping professional identity intersect daily, psychological safety is crucial. In professions centred on empathy, communication, and compassion, trainers, supervisors, and team leaders are responsible for actively embodying and modelling safety. This requires embedding opportunities for collaborative learning, structured debriefing, and demonstrating openness, respect, and non judgmental dialogue (Figueroa, 2026; Yadav et al., 2025; Capezio et al., 2023). These practices are not just optional, but foundational. Embedding these behaviours into training routines and institutional culture is believed to ensure that psychological safety is sustained, empowering learners to grow into confident, resilient, and compassionate professionals.



SCAN HERE FOR  
REFERENCES IN ALL  
THE ARTICLES

---

# NEW PROGRAMS COMMENCING

---

We're thrilled to announce that the Faculty of Health Sciences has opened for admission for new programs in the following areas:



**BACHELOR OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY (HONOURS)**

**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN SPEECH-LANGUAGE  
PATHOLOGY (HONOURS)**

**BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN PARAMEDIC SCIENCES**

These programs aim to address emerging needs in the health sector and provide advanced learning opportunities for professionals across the country.