One of four children to Nigerian parents, Mr Kalu grew up in North London. On his reasoning for choosing medicine he reports he was “fascinated by the pathology of normal health systems of the body and how this manifests in real life conditions.” He studied at St. Mary’s Hospital Medical School in London, where he also did his house jobs. A career in surgery was attractive for Peter as he could use surgical skills to sort physical problems in a constantly changing field.

Prior to commencing surgical training in Leeds, Peter worked for six months in an A&E department in Queensland, Australia. Despite being told it would ruin his chances at a surgical career, he saw it as an opportunity to stand out. When asked what advice he would have for aspiring surgeons, he responded with, “not being in any rush to get to the end. Get as much experience as you possibly can. No experience is wasted.” He highlighted that trainees have time on their side, and if something doesn’t go their way, there is always the opportunity to try again.

Mr Kalu was awarded a Microsurgery Fellowship in Oxford in 2015 and subsequently went on to become a Plastic Surgery Consultant. “When you start off in surgery as a Consultant, it is a real step up in professionalism which you don’t truly appreciate until you are in that position. In the initial period, I remember doing a major operative procedure that was not going as textbook as you would want. You have to just dig deep, go back to first principles, relax and solve the problem.” Mr Kalu states he has developed through reflection to appreciate the good aspects and work on the aspects that warrant improvement.

As the previous Plastic Surgery Representative for the University of Oxford Surgical Training Committee, Peter is keen to teach. He emphasises the importance of adaptability in teaching. “People work in very different ways; there is not a one off way to teach everyone. Some are much more hands on; some have a much more theoretical and academic approach.”

Mr Kalu believes the best part of his job is seeing the ‘evolution’ of patients. “Seeing them change and grow, I have had patients at their lowest when they have just been diagnosed with breast cancer. You have to try to pick them up and be as positive as you can. Then seeing them after their operation with their results, and getting to the point where they are discharged. Surgery is great, but it is the means to an end to see this transformation in a patient so that they can move on with their life that is the most rewarding aspect.”