

Surgeon Profile Series

Ms Ann Etohan Ogbemudia

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Ms Ann Etohan Ogbemudia is a General Surgery registrar at Oxford University Hospitals (OUH) NHS Foundation Trust, with an interest in abdominal transplantation.

Born in Surrey to two Nigerian parents, Ms Ogbemudia spent much of her childhood travelling. After she started primary school in the United Kingdom, her family moved to Nigeria, and finally ended up moving to the United States. Coming from a high-achieving family of engineers, lawyers and doctors, she is grateful for all the positive influence and support she received in challenging herself academically.

Since the age of seven, it was her ambition to pursue medicine. Her uncle, who was a family doctor, acted as a role model in the early stages of her education. He provided opportunities for her to shadow him in clinics, gifted her a stethoscope, and inspired her to pursue a career where she could take care of people. When it came to university applications, she decided to come back to the United Kingdom, and got accepted into pre-clinical medicine at University of St Andrew's, following which she went on to study clinical medicine in Edinburgh.

Throughout clinical school, Ms Ogbemudia particularly enjoyed her surgical attachments. She attributes this to surgeons making her feel included in the team by allowing her to participate in procedures. Assisting in the smallest ways such as putting in a skin staple, gave her a sense of altruism and accomplishment, which made

her certain of the fact that she wanted to pursue a career in surgery. On reflection, Ms Ogbemudia reminisces how these positive interactions with surgeons during the early stages of her career have impacted on her practice now as a registrar, where she always strives to act as a role model to medical students by getting them involved and making them feel welcome.

After graduation, she stayed in Edinburgh for her foundation years, ensuring her rotations aligned with her focus on improving her surgical skillset. She achieved this by undertaking attachments within various surgical specialties, and worked with perioperative patients during rotations such as intensive care. During her core surgical training she developed a specialty interest in vascular surgery, being attracted to its anatomy and the fact that it is not limited to one body compartment. Although she was not awarded a vascular training number during the first round of applications, she refocused her efforts to achieve a general surgery number in the Thames Valley region a year later. Despite initially viewing this as a setback, Ms Ogbemudia decided to view it as an opportunity to prepare and practice for the transition to becoming an effective surgical registrar. Early in this training she felt fortunate to have had a transplantation attachment, where she appreciated its similarity to vascular surgery, seeing it as 'applied vascular surgery' and loved its unique challenges and merits.

Transplantation is a specialty that pushes its practitioners to acquire a vast knowledge base of immunology, anatomy, pharmacology and physiology. It requires collaborative work as part of a multidisciplinary team. Ms Ogbemudia states that the field also provides the unique opportunity to represent two patients at once: the donor as well as the recipient. Since the specialty relies on one person donating to save another person's life, she states that "transplant is the only specialty that celebrates the best of humankind"; this idea keeps her motivated.

To prepare for a career in transplant surgery, Ms Ogbemudia took time out of training to do a PhD, and she has now returned for the remaining year in general surgery, after which she will continue her training. During such a long and complex training path, Ms Ogbemudia emphasises the importance of setting time aside for personal life in the all-consuming world of surgical training. By attending comedy clubs, going for brunch with colleagues, and keeping up

stamina though spinning, she strives to maintain a healthy balance while pursuing this demanding career.

Among facing all the challenges associated with surgical training, Ms Ogbemudia takes pride in being a female surgeon from a Nigerian background, in a field in which she states there is still not as much equality as one would hope. After growing up in a family in which she was empowered to pursue any career, she has occasionally experienced differing treatment by either patients or staff compared to her male colleagues, in scenarios unfortunately recognised as familiar by fellow female surgeons. In a male-dominated field, she strives to show any aspiring medical student to accept no barriers because gratification of being a surgeon is worth it. Her advice is to “find a mentor and be a mentor”.