

Where are they now?

SPOTLIGHT ON CHM CLINICAL OPHTHALMOLOGY GRADUATE AND PYOTT SCHOLAR, DR CHINSISI NAMATE NYIRENDA, CONSULTANT OPHTHALMOLOGIST, MALAWI

The Eye News and University of Edinburgh teams last met up with Zomba-based Dr Chinsisi Namate Nyirenda, in Glasgow, May 2022, when she was a member of The Ophthalmological Society of Malawi’s delegation to the Royal College of Ophthalmologists Annual Congress. At the time, Chinsisi was in her final year of her University of Edinburgh ChM (Master of Surgery) Clinical Ophthalmology degree programme, studying part-time whilst training in Malawi. We can’t fail to be inspired by her account of her professional journey since then. A lot can happen in a year!

Where are you now?

So, when I started the ChM, I was in my final year of residency. The programme really assisted me in preparing for my final exam as the lectures touched on a lot of aspects of clinical ophthalmology. At the beginning of my second year of ChM, I was a junior consultant and soon posted to a different hospital that had no ophthalmologist. I went from junior consultant to head of department in a space of six months. It was not an easy adjustment but I took it a day at a time. The lectures in the ChM programme on leadership and management were a great help.

I wouldn’t have been able to do the ChM course without the scholarship from The David and Molly Pyott Foundation. The tuition was a lot of money and my salary was less than 10% of the tuition at the time. So, you can imagine how thrilled I was when I got it. Not only was my tuition covered but I received funds to purchase a new laptop and was provided internet to get through the course. I am forever grateful to David and Molly Pyott.

It has been busy since I finished my ChM in Clinical Ophthalmology last year. I was Congress Chair for the ninth annual College of Ophthalmologists of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa (COECSA) Congress, which was hosted in my country, Malawi. I was privileged to be part of the candidates who graduated as a fellow of COECSA at the Congress. Following this, I was selected to be the Young Ophthalmologists Forum (YOF) representative on the COECSA council.

The ChM programme really increased my interest in research. This led me to publish my Masters in Medicine (MMED) in Ophthalmology thesis and engage myself in taking part in more research. I am currently taking part in a study about Mooren’s ulcer in my region and have yet to take part in a global retinoblastoma presentation (2024) and outcome (2027) study. I was also privileged to present my MMED thesis findings at the ISSO Africa 2023 conference.

I was also key in developing the National Retinoblastoma guidelines in Malawi this year. Working in a low-resource setting can be very challenging. This prompted me to apply for a grant through the Lions Club in our city. The club was awarded the Sight First grant which is going towards infrastructure development and procurement of equipment in our eye unit. I managed to bring together three partners from different parts of the world to assist us in matching funds for the equipment. I have also been supervising cataract surgeons during their refresher courses sponsored by a local non-governmental organisation.

I am grateful for the skills the ChM program instilled in me and look forward to a great future ahead as I work to improve eye services in the southeast zone of Malawi.



Further Reading

1. Eye News. *In conversation with The Ophthalmological Society of Malawi* (2022). <https://www.eyenews.uk.com/features/interviews/post/in-conversation-with-the-ophthalmological-society-of-malawi>
2. The University of Edinburgh. *Ophthalmology Masters*. <https://www.ed.ac.uk/clinical-sciences/ophthalmology/masters>

[All links last accessed September 2023]

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