

BIGGER PICTURE

Simulation training changes quality of health care halfway around the world

May 22, 2019



Dr. Nkechi Dike was the first international fellow at the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Simulation Center at Mayo Clinic's Florida campus. Now Dr. Dike is back in Africa as the medical director of the clinical skills laboratory in Ghana's Cape Coast University, using her fellowship experience to deliver new training in emergency medicine techniques.

Every journey begins with the first step, as the saying goes, but for Nkechi Dike, M.B., Ch.B., her international journey to bring simulation education to Africa moved forward with one click — one she almost never made.

The first international fellow at the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Simulation Center at the Florida campus, Dr. Dike still remembers that fateful click. It sent her completed fellowship application to Leslie Simon, D.O., director of the Simulation Medicine Fellowship program, just 45 minutes before the program's deadline expired.

"I thought they would only take American doctors and there'd be a lot of competition," Dr. Dike says. "But my mentor kept encouraging me to apply. So I got everything together, typed my personal statement, and kept my fingers crossed."

That application, especially that personal statement, was like a lightning bolt, Dr. Simon says.

"I knew I wanted her as a fellow immediately," Dr. Simon says. "She was someone I knew we could help and learn from."

Broadening Mayo's view of global health

The international fellowship program is designed for education that goes both ways. Fellows learn how to run simulation programs, and they teach students at Mayo Clinic and other medical centers, based on their experience in very different medical environments. Dr. Simon was especially interested in seeing the curriculum through Dr. Dike's eyes.



Dr. Nkechi Dike as a medical resident in Africa

"We practice in a kind of medical utopia," Dr. Simon says. "Nkechi has a lot of contingency plans for things we never think about. Working with her has broadened our view about the resources in the rest of the world and improved our ability to provide global health education."

At the same time, Dr. Dike's hands-on skills have helped Dr. Simon and others reinforce an important message amid today's technology-laden environment in U.S. health care.

"You have to be able to assess a patient without technology," says Kristin Rosenbush, operations manager of the Weaver Simulation Center. "She's very good at using her senses to look, listen and feel to make a diagnosis."

Changing quality of health care in Africa

Now Dr. Dike is back in Africa, hoping to bring together her experiences from two different hemispheres to help patients. She is the medical director of the clinical skills laboratory in Ghana's Cape Coast University, and she's already using her fellowship experience to deliver new training in emergency medicine techniques.

At the same time, she's introducing technologies to her students that she hopes will "drive demand," and ultimately lead to better equipped hospitals and health care teams throughout Africa. "If we have the skills, it will drive supplies," she says. "If more people know how to place a central line, we'll have more central lines."

And Ghana is only her first step.

Dr. Dike says simulation training can change the quality of health care across Africa. It's a lofty vision, but her Mayo Clinic colleagues believe in her and they hope to play a part. Both Dr. Simon and Rosenbush say they hope to start an exchange program with Dr. Dike so other doctors from Ghana and beyond can get the same kind of training Dr. Dike experienced.

"I'm excited to see where her program goes," Dr. Simon says. "She has a lot of enthusiasm and the potential to make a real impact."

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