A dentist in training reflects on the rigors of dental school; a future in pediatric dentistry

BY: LYNN ANDERSON DAVY

When he was a child, Ebosetale Okoruwa thought his mom, a pediatrician, had a pretty cool job. Then, when he was about 7 years old, she showed him a video of her helping to deliver a baby. At that moment, the young Okoruwa decided that medicine wasn’t for him after all.

Even so, Okoruwa remained intrigued by the sciences, and so a decade later, when he came to the University of Iowa as an undergraduate, he decided to study biochemistry. It was during his junior year, a period when Okoruwa was thinking hard about career choices, that he shadowed a pediatric dentist in his hometown of Council Bluffs.

The experience showed Okoruwa another way that he could help children and another way to make a career using scientific and medical knowledge.

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"The dentist I shadowed had such a presence in his clinic and in the community and he could talk to anyone – to kids and to their parents," says Okoruwa. "The experience really was a spring board for me into dentistry."

March 6 is National Dentist's Day, an annual celebration of dentists and the important services they provide. And for Okoruwa, it's also a day to reflect on how far he's come since he started his graduate school journey—one that has allowed him to learn from nationally-recognized dentistry professors and researchers.

"Thanks to my mother, I was exposed very early on to healthcare and medical professions," Okoruwa says. "I always knew it was something I wanted to pursue. Now, as I prepare to graduate, I feel like I'm realizing a goal I set for myself when I was still very young. It's an incredible feeling."

Since then, Okoruwa hasn't looked back. Now in his fourth year at the UI College of Dentistry, he recently wrapped up a rotation in a pediatric dental clinic in Denver, CO, and is already thinking about his next step: a residency program in pediatric dentistry at the University of Minnesota.

Getting accepted into the residency program was made easier, Okoruwa says, by the fact that the UI College of Dentistry has a strong reputation in dental and oral health research. During his interviews, professors asked him about specific UI research efforts, as well as the professors who spearheaded them.

"The University of Iowa is definitely right up there at the top in terms of best dental schools," says Okoruwa. "Everywhere I went for residency program interviews, people were like, 'Oh, you're from Iowa,' and they wanted to talk to me about the faculty and the research we do here. I feel like the college's reputation definitely gave me an inside edge."

UI College of Dentistry Dean David Johnsen says it's the college's balance of top-notch professors and cutting-edge research that set the college apart from its competitors. For students, the opportunity to work with researchers and learn about the science behind dental techniques is also a way to stand out on the job market.

"Our students regularly out-perform students from other dental colleges on national board exams, and all of them are highly sought after upon graduation, either for jobs in dental practices or for advanced programs such as residencies," Johnsen said.

As Okoruwa prepares to leave the UI, he's also cognizant of what he'll be leaving behind: a college that has been his home for the past four years and a group of professors and friends whom he will never forget.

"For me, the college was always a very welcoming place, a place where people always say hello and always have time to stop and talk with you," says Okoruwa. "I feel like we're sort of a big family, and that's been a great environment to be in for the past four years."
On February 22, Dr. Richard Walton (Professor Emeritus, Endodontics) spoke about Iowa Mission of Mercy (IMOM) to the Iowa City Rotary Club. IMOM is a large scale, two-day community dental clinic where over 1,000 volunteers, including many oral health care professionals, donate their time to provide free oral health care to individuals who face barriers to receiving dental care. A full-service field dental clinic with 100 dental operatories is set up and approximately 1,000 patients are treated on a first come, first served basis. There are typically over 5,000 procedures, and the total value of those procedures is approximately one million dollars.

IMOM is sponsored by the Iowa Dental Association, but the College of Dentistry plays an important role each year. Dr. Patty Meredith serves on the State Steering Committee for IMOM and is the clinic director for the entire event. Furthermore, many of our faculty, students, and staff volunteer during the event. And some of our retired faculty members continue to participate—Dr. Walton has participated for over 10 years.
Dental Students Participate in the UIHC Teddy Bear Clinic

On Saturday March 3, some of the members of the Pediatric Dentistry Student Group volunteered at the UIHC Teddy Bear Clinic held at the Iowa River Landing. In cooperation with the College of Medicine, the College of Dentistry has participated the past few years by setting up a dental booth along with other stations from the College of Medicine. Children are invited to bring their teddy bears or dolls and rotate through the various stations. At the dental booth, children simulate a dental visit for their teddy bears. They use some of the tools used in a dental appointment. The children receive a toothbrush as well. This event has always been a popular one, and the children, families, and dental students all seem to enjoy the experience. The dental students participating this year were Colby Beck D3, Adam Woroniecki D2, Kali Disterhoft D1, and Liz Skotowski D1.

Liz Skotowski and Adam Woroniecki posed with a child attending the UIHC Teddy Bear Clinic at the Iowa River Landing.

A Selection of Photos from National Staff Appreciation Day

Gina Pottorff and Dr. Richard Walton

Rosemary Stanley
Laura Felleman

Left to Right: Jalyssa Jepson, Gina Pottorff, and JoEllen Jepson

JoEllen Jepson, Beth Burgess, and Jess Heberlie setting up for National Staff Appreciation Day

Left to Right: Gina Pottorff, Beth Burgess, and JoEllen Jepson
DSB Weekly Submissions

If you have news/photos you would like to submit to the DSB Weekly, please send them to Michael Tilley (jmtilley@uiowa.edu).

Recent Publications


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The Latest Research News

Filling Station Menu

Dentistry in the News

The University of Iowa submitted a number of stories to local papers across the state regarding several of our dental students. One such story was published in the Creston News (Union County, Iowa) about Paige Jones (D2), and another was published in the Globe Gazette (Mason City) about Grace Moore (D3).

February 28 was National Tooth Fairy Day, and the USA Today reported a fun story about how surveys indicate that the Tooth Fairy is handing out $0.53 less per tooth this past year than she did two years ago.

Notables

• The College of Dentistry has 56 people giving presentations at the AADR conference later this month. The only university that had more presenters than the University of Iowa was Tufts University with 60 presenters.

• Paige Jones (D2) took over the University of Iowa’s Snapchat account on National Dentists Day. She took us through a day in the life of a dental student. Check out the video here!

• On January 26, 2018, the Iowa Dental Board announced appointments to the Opioid Task Force and the Expanded Functions Task Force. The College of Dentistry is well-represented on both committees with Dr. Mike Kanellis, Dr. Karen Baker, and Dr. Kyle Stein serving on the Opioid Task Force and Dr. Patty Meredith and Dr. Tad Mabry serving on the Expanded Functions Task Force. See the full list here.

Lend a Hand to a Coworker

Due to medical issues, Holly Bolt, Oral Surgery Dental Assistant, has exhausted her sick leave and vacation. If you would like to help Holly by contributing vacation time, please fill out the form at: https://hr.uiowa.edu/sites/hr.uiowa.edu/files/ contrib.pdf.

Filling Station Hours Over Spring Break

Over the week of Spring Break (March 12-16), the Filling Station will be open from 7:30am-2:00pm Monday through Friday.
Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses

Faculty and staff are reminded of the following policy regarding work-related injuries and illnesses:

All faculty and staff must complete a “First Report of Injury” form for ANY on-the-job injury. This electronic form can be found on Employee Self Service - on the “Personal” tab; under the “Benefits” header (half-way down the center column); last item “Workers Compensation-First Report of Injury”.

All faculty and staff members must be initially treated at UI HealthWorks, 3 Lions Drive in North Liberty (off Hwy 965), for any work-related injury or illness. EXCEPTION: care needed as a result of needle sticks, blood borne pathogens, and infectious diseases will continue to be provided by the University Employee Health Clinic at UIHC.

UI HealthWorks is open Monday through Friday 8 am to 5 pm, and the University Employee Health Clinic, Clinic A is open Monday through Friday from 8 am to 4:30 pm. If possible, please phone UI HealthWorks (356-3335) or the Employee Health Clinic (3-8653) prior to arriving for treatment.

When UI HealthWorks or the University Employee Health Clinic is closed, the UIHC Emergency Treatment Center should be used. You must inform the Emergency Center staff that you are requesting treatment due to a workplace injury. Emergencies are considered to be the sudden, serious and unexpected onset of symptoms that require immediate medical care.

Please carefully note the following important fact: any initial treatment for a work-related injury or illness received outside of UI HealthWorks, the University Employee Health Clinic or University Hospital Emergency Center will not be covered by either Worker’s Compensation or your University health insurance plan. If you have questions, please contact Dental Human Resources at 5-9650.
Sindhura Anamali, BDS, MS
Clinical Assistant Professor
Department of Oral Pathology,
Radiology & Medicine

WHERE DID YOU GROW UP? I was lucky to grow up in two cosmopolitan and vibrant cities: Hyderabad and Chennai, in the southern part of India. Each city has its own unique culture, historical monuments and cuisine.

IF YOU HADN’T CHOSEN DENTISTRY, WHAT OTHER CAREER WOULD YOU HAVE CHOSEN? An artist, a chocolatier or an interior designer. There are so many things that I love to do.

WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DO YOU ENJOY? I love instrumental music and soothing Western and Hindustani music.

WHAT IS YOUR IDEA OF A PERFECT MEAL? Simple home cooked food with a candlelight dinner.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE COMEDIAN? Jerry Seinfeld – I can so relate to simple everyday happenings showcased in his series.

WHO IS YOUR FAVORITE ACTOR (ACTRESS)? Cate Blanchett, Aamir Khan and George Clooney.

IF YOU COULD TRAVEL ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD, WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GO? I love to travel and see historical places: the Colosseum (Rome), Ajanta and Elora caves (India) and the pyramids of Egypt – I will be in awe when I see the pyramids in front of me. I definitely want to see them.

WHAT DOES TEACHING AT THE DENTAL COLLEGE MEAN TO YOU? It is truly an honor and a privilege to teach at the dental college.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO DENTAL STUDENTS? Every day, every person you meet and every good or bad situation teaches you something; in either case, you come out more enriched.