

Bukky Ajagbe: Seeking diversity in medicine

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Staff News Writer



The AMA “Members Move Medicine” series profiles a wide variety of doctors, offering a glimpse into the passions of women and men navigating new courses in American medicine.

On the move with: Bukky Ajagbe, a second-year medical student at Lincoln Memorial University-DeBusk College of Osteopathic Medicine (LMU-DCOM) in Harrogate, Tennessee. She is also a member of the AMA Minority Issues Committee and AMA Minority Affairs Section.

AMA member since: 2016.

What inspired me to pursue a career in medicine: My love for answering the question of ‘why’ is what inspired me to pursue medicine. Growing up I have always been inquisitive and curious, and I developed an interest in trying to figure out why our bodies do what they do. Furthermore, due to my surroundings growing up, I wanted to become someone who not only explored why, but also was in a position to address the many inequities I personally experienced and witness specifically related to healthcare.

How I move medicine: By being an advocate for the diversity of students in medicine, and my passion for highlighting and addressing the barriers in medicine.

Career highlights:

- | Chair of Diversity for the LMU-DCOM Student Government Association (first one in our school’s history!).
- | Board of Directors for the Student National Medical Association.
- | Director of the Future Leadership Project at the Student National Medical Association.
- | Member of the Tennessee Medical Association and the Tennessee Osteopathic Medical Association.
- | I make it a point to attend advocacy days at both the state and national capitol hills.
- | I received a research grant through the National Institutes of Health – National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disorders.

Advice I’d give to those interested in pursuing a career in medicine: Never, ever, give up. Every step in medicine is hard—from getting into medical school, to match and residency. You are your own best advocate, always find creative ways to accomplish your goals! Be your true and authentic self. Lastly, find a way to see the bright parts of medical education and training. Take time to explore what you are interested in—both in and out of medicine—and cultivate that. Find great mentors who will hopefully become your biggest allies, and when you are ready give that mentorship back to someone else coming after you.

How I give back to the community: I advocate for patients by continuing involvement in health policy and advocacy. In addition to this I volunteer in my local community at the elementary schools,

fulfilling the space where physical education once was. Due to funding reasons, it has been taken out of their daily curriculum. Whether it is meeting local, state, and national politicians, or working with the most vulnerable yet impressionable, I enjoy giving back to communities who have provided so much to me.

Additionally, I maintain ongoing involvement in the Student National Medical Association to support the mission of not only supporting and actively increasing the number of minority medical students, but also ensuring that we address the needs of underserved communities. Whether we are looking at the disproportionate rates of maternal death in African American women, or the decreasing number of African American males in medicine, I genuinely believe that diversifying medicine with competent medical students and physicians is one of the best ways we can be in positions to advocate for our patients.

Aspect of my work that means the most: Meeting and working with students who have a sincere passion for medicine and advocacy. I have met the greatest people who I genuinely believe will change the world one day. Additionally, seeing change happen as a direct result of advocacy is one of the best feelings in the world, both large (U.S.) and small (medical school) scale. I find the most joy in my ongoing work within organized medicine, which has allowed me to meet and work with mentors who are real life examples that a career in medicine is real, attainable, and possible.

My hope for the future of medicine: I hope to see increased numbers of diverse medical students, with medical schools and institutions addressing the disparities that exist in medical education. Additionally, I hope that with every passing year, we as a society continue to find ways to improve access to health care across the board.

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