# Inclusive Pharmacy Practice Bulletin

## Inspiring Future Leaders

According to the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (Advance HE Athena Swan Principles, 2020) we should be increasing opportunities for all, and improving representation for women and ethnic minorities in senior roles. This is particularly important when we are trying to encourage aspiration in our Pharmacy Undergraduates, especially given that only 13.2% of current NHS board members are from black and ethnic minority backgrounds. Moreover, only 9.6% are at executive level, when overall, black and ethnic minority staff make up 24.2% of the NHS workforce (WRES Team, 2022).

One of the EDI initiatives at Keele School of Pharmacy and Bioengineering is a series of "Inspiring Future Careers" talks to bring in a range of Pharmacists with differing specialities and levels of seniority to talk about their career journeys. At the request of student representatives, we started to look for role models within the profession who could share their experiences of progressing their careers and the challenges they may have overcome along the way. On the basis that 'you can't be what you can't see' we are casting our net as widely as possible to encompass as wide a variety of backgrounds as possible.

Our first speaker was Abiola Allinson, Chief Pharmacist at Sheffield Health and Social Care NHS Foundation Trust, overseeing the provision of a range of mental health, learning disability and substance misuse services to the people of Sheffield.

Abiola gained experience in acute medicine, community pharmacy and rheumatology before embarking on a career in mental health where he found his true passion. Using anecdotes and examples from his own career path he demonstrated that leadership is a state of mind and does not just come with seniority. For example, he described a time when in a junior position he was instrumental in influencing a change in prescribing relating to use of inappropriately high doses of antipsychotic medication.

His own leadership journey encompassed a firm belief in continuing professional development, and he completed the NHS Leadership Academy Mary Seacole and Nye Bevan programmes (NHS Leadership Academy, 2023). He commented that the Nye Bevan programme particularly was extremely challenging but rewarding in terms of personal development.

Abiola talked about the importance of authenticity and not being afraid to express his identity as a 'proud Nigerian', and his values as a person of faith. For example, he started to challenge the use of a shortened version of his name (Abi), choosing to reclaim 'Abiola' and therefore his Nigerian heritage. He emphasised the importance of a diversity of voices, background and life experience in teams and decision making to enhance creativity and decrease the influence of monocultural 'groupthink' (Cleary, Lees, & Sayers, 2019).

This has also led Abiola to work towards wider representation as a council member of the College of Mental Health Pharmacists (CMHP) and co-chair of the pan-Sheffield Race Equity Inclusion Group (REIG). This group's raison d'être is to tackle health and social inequalities in Sheffield ensuring the ethnic minority citizens of Sheffield voices are heard at the tables where decisions are made to improve outcomes for them.

When asked why he felt it was important to give this talk he said, it was important to share his story. “How do you aspire, if you cannot see yourself there? Am I there yet? No, but it is a journey of continuous discovery and values driven self-improvement.”

The talk was well received with one of the students commenting that “It was a very thought-provoking and informative talk and I have definitely learnt to not be afraid to try out new things and I’m encouraged to have the confidence to speak out about concerns in my future workplace.”

Following the success of this first speaker we have plans to welcome Clair Huckerby (Chief (Consultant) Pharmacist Our Health Partnership) and Rajiv Pandiya (deputy Chief Pharmacist, Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and first intake Alumnus).

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