



After MBBS/BDS; What Next?

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COMMENTARY

It is a unique opportunity to inform and educate colleague- to-be in the medical and dental schools.¹ Approximately two decades ago I was an undergraduate in the medical college of university of Benin, Nigeria and today I am a medical doctor.² For as many undergraduates or specialists in different fields of endeavor I wish your fulfillment of your dreams.³ MBBS is an acronym for Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery awarded by some universities in Nigeria on completion of undergraduate medical training; some other universities use the acronym MBCHB which means same thing; the equivalent for dental colleague who graduated as dentist is BDS which is Bachelor of Dental Surgery.²⁻⁴

Gone are the days when undergraduate medical students and medical doctors are revered in Nigeria because the value system in Nigeria is all about money irrespective of how it is gotten.³ This article serves as a wake-up call for undergraduates in the medical schools across the globe but Nigeria in particular, that there is still pride in becoming a medical doctor or a dental surgeon.⁴ Whatever thy hands find to do, do it with all thy heart.⁵ The present chaos in the health sector in Nigeria has made the Nigerian doctors an endangered species.⁶ However, we must encourage our

undergraduate medical students to be focused with respect to becoming excellent doctors.⁷ There are a variety of ways medical doctors can fit into the society and still be fulfilled.^{2-8,9-12,14-16}

Before we answer the question which is the subject of discussion- after MBBS; what next? As an undergraduate medical or dental student, you should answer this question- why did you choose to study medicine or dentistry? Whatever your reasons are, you are encouraged to finish your course and finish well.¹⁻³

After medical or dental school in the context of the Nigerian system, it is mandatory to serve the nation in the compulsory – National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme after the compulsory one year internship.⁴⁻⁹ During this period, one should be prepared to chart a course in his or her medical/dental career.¹⁰ Options available are – residency training, pursuing masters in medical related fields (e.g basic medical sciences, public health), handing your certificate to your sponsors or guardian; go into business, politics or combining one or two of the above listed options.¹¹

Residency training opportunity is one of the options available for medical or dental surgeons after internship and NYSC.¹¹ Undergraduates are advised to have mentors so that they can be guarded in their chosen specialties.¹⁻² In essence going in for residency entails a proper homework in the specialty of his or her

interest.¹² At present, even though residency spaces are limited both at home and abroad,¹⁴ undergraduate medical students are encouraged to go in for residency training.¹⁴ I quote from Abraham Lincoln "I will study and get ready and someday my chance will come".¹³ After a successful residency training the doctor becomes a consultant in his/her chosen area of specialty.¹⁴ The common pathway after becoming a consultant is either to be in the private or public sector or a combination of both.¹⁶ Furthermore, a consultant in the public health sector may be a full time hospital consultant or may also serve as a university lecturer and a honorary consultant to the teaching hospital.¹⁶ The latter may now climb the academic ladder in the university to become a professor in his or her chosen specialty.¹⁶

Enrolling in masters program, Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and proceeding as a lecturer is another option medical students can take as a career after their undergraduate training.¹⁵ These group of doctors or dental professionals are non-clinicians and are pivotal especially in the basic medical sciences in the university.¹⁵ These non-clinicians together with the clinicians in the teaching hospital setting synergize especially in the area of research.^{14,15} For medical and dental professionals who do not intend to be clinicians but strictly academicians, they should consider going for master degree and PhD.¹⁵

Another area in which medical and dental students can have fulfillment after graduation is to go into politics.¹¹⁻¹⁴ In our every day contemporary life, it is important for medical doctors and dental surgeons to be in politics because these are the ones who make laws that govern the nation at all levels.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ When those in medical profession are members of legislature they will defend their constituency. In addition they will also encourage the passage bills against harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, unsafe abortion, just to mention a few.⁸⁻¹²

There are other categories of doctors/dental surgeons who are classified as the miscellaneous group. These are those that are in the category of studying medicine or dentistry because they wanted to please their parents, loved ones, guardians, friends,¹⁻⁴ – these ones may go into business, music, fashion, banking, settle for other career after graduation as medical doctors or dental surgeons.¹⁰⁻¹²

The last group are the combination group - medical doctors or dental surgeons as clergy, politicians, lawyers, businessmen or women.^{2-4,14-16}

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion we must be circumspect as medical or dental students as we consider the various options to explore after graduation. I conclude by quoting the words of Martin Luther King Jr. "if you cannot run then walk, if you cannot walk the crawl, if you cannot crawl; but whatever you do you have to keep moving...".¹⁷

Whatever the pathway you decide to choose after MBBS or BDS strive for excellence.

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