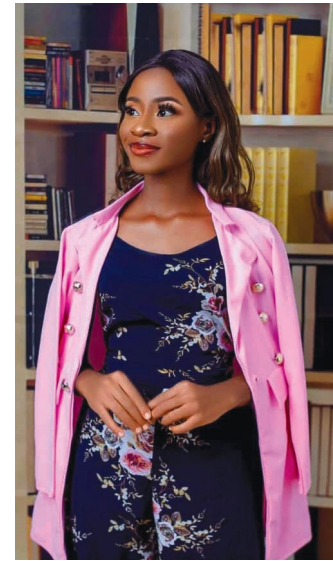


MINI INTERVIEW

'My core values brought me this far'

Kate Quinlan interviews Irene Moremi Udebuana, a Nigerian dental student who is also a robotics engineer and philanthropist.



About Irene

Irene Moremi Udebuana, a 21-year-old dental student at the University of Nigeria, is an advanced robotics engineer, a philanthropist, and an advocate for empowering African youths in technology and leadership. Irene is from Ekwusigo in Anambra State, in the South East of Nigeria.

Irene is the current President of the Subadult Africans Robotics Association (SARA) and has worked on a virtual reality project for medical students and doctors, and a smart irrigation system for Nigerian and Ugandan farmers.

In 2018, Irene founded How About the Boy Child (HABC), an initiative whose sole aim is ensuring that less privileged and orphaned young boys get a better chance at being properly educated and nurtured to become high achievers in their lifetimes.

Irene has received various national and international awards for her philanthropic work including the Miriam Makeba award for female youth empowerment in October 2021 – the youngest African to achieve such a feat.

Irene was also recently appointed Director of the Save A Breast Campaign, YOHAN (Youth Health Action Network) and is involved with introducing medical and dental robotics in the curriculum of African universities.

Interview

Are there dentists among your relatives?

Irene: Amongst my relatives, I'll be the first specialising in dentistry. My brother, Chibueze Hilary Udebuana, studies medicine and surgery. My father is a practising barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. He is also an industrialist in cosmetic

products manufacturing. My mother is an information technologist by qualification; however, she's currently into educational management and runs a College in Lagos, Nigeria. My best friend Alvin's sister-in-law and his cousin are female dentists practising in the UK and Nigeria respectively. [Editor's note: It was Alvin who wrote to the *BDJ* about Irene.]

What were your ambitions when you were at high school?

Having always dreamed of being a doctor, I was in the sciences class at high school. Being privileged to be selected by my high school chemistry teacher to attend the WAAW Foundation STEM bootcamp for girls in the summer break of 2015, my interest in innovative technology grew and I looked forward to setting up a college specialising in educating Nigerian kids specifically on technological skills. I graduated in 2016.

Can you describe your education since leaving high school?

On leaving high school, I spent a year at Lagos State University (LASU) studying pure and industrial chemistry. Eventually, I was admitted to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, to read dentistry and dental surgery, and I changed schools. Simultaneously, my interest in technology was stirred up while in my first year of study in dental school. I took up software programming courses and eventually decided to apply my newly acquired skills in medical/dental robotics and engineering. It wasn't a smooth ride, as I had to ensure my academic life never suffered due to my extracurricular activities. I look back now, and I know it was worth it, as my self-discipline and general development positively improved in the long run due to the added responsibilities.

What is an 'advanced robotics engineer' and how did you become one?

I began to learn and practise robotics engineering two years ago, specialising in systems integration. This aspect summarily handles the process of programming and outfitting industrial robots so they can perform automated manufacturing tasks.

Soon after learning software programming, my mentor introduced me to a few courses on robotics and my career in that aspect kicked off months later. Whilst learning everyday, I hope to be able to apply these skills to improve my dental career in the future.

How did you become involved with so many philanthropic activities?

I have always found peace in volunteering towards causes such as gender empowerment, health disabilities, and human rights as these directly affect not just my development, but also that of every African child and youth. I volunteered in a good number of organisations and book clubs. Eventually, I founded the How About the Boy Child initiative in 2018 in honour of a late friend. Recently, I was appointed to be the Director of the Save A Breast Campaign at the Youth Health Action Network (YOHAN). Being of positive service to others is one of my core values, and I ensure that I live up to it.

So far, I'm proudest of the How About the Boy Child initiative. Having to care about the wellbeing of less privileged and orphaned Nigerian boys, especially those living with sickle cell anaemia, has entirely changed ►►

« my outlook on our purpose in life. I understand better the importance of us living for ourselves, especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

How have you achieved so much at the age of just 21?

Learning to live for others and striving to make positive changes in the lives of other African children and youths around me, has been my sole motivation towards every task/ goal I have accomplished so far. My core values brought me this far.

Does your family have a very strong work ethic?

Absolutely. My siblings and I are all goal-oriented, and this we subconsciously learnt from our parents. I'm lucky to have my family, as the bond gives me courage daily. My siblings and I know that divided we all will fall, so together, we stand.

Why did you decide to become a dentist?

I have always been fascinated watching videos of oral and maxillofacial surgeons transforming the appearance of patients with facial deformities (congenital and disease-caused). I recall going to our general school library often to view illustrations in textbooks that covered this specialty. It was my sole inspiration to become a dental surgeon.

Do many of the Nigerian population have regular access to dental services?

The awareness of dentistry in Nigeria is improving and access to the services dentists provide at government hospitals and privately run dental clinics. There have been a few basic challenges and despite this, we are positive with the introduction of teledentistry and a few other innovations in Nigeria that our growth will increase exponentially over the next few years.

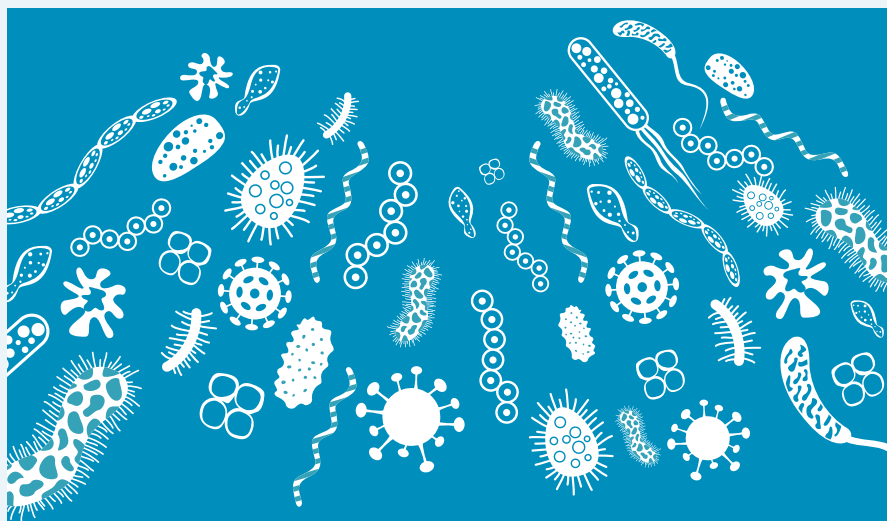
Where do you hope to work after graduation?

On graduation, I'll have my dental internship at a different Nigerian dental school (so as to experience a new environment). Afterwards, I plan to specialise in oral and maxillofacial surgery and work towards not limiting my practice just to Nigeria, but also expanding into another continent. I also plan to enrol for a Master's programme to get an MBA.

What are your plans for 2023?

The coming year will be an exciting and challenging one. I'll be starting up a new business venture soon after my 4th MBBS/ BDS exams in February. My major aim of doing this is to ensure I never settle in my comfort zone on matters concerning entrepreneurship in Nigeria. I look forward to experiencing and learning about things not primarily taught in schools. ■ ✦

New synopsis of antimicrobial prescribing guidelines



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The College of General Dentistry and Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of England have co-published a chairside synopsis of *Antimicrobial prescribing in dentistry: good practice guidelines*.

The guidelines offer clear, simple and practical guidance on the use of antimicrobials by dental teams, and the current third edition was developed by the Faculty of General Dental Practice (now College of General Dentistry) and the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the

Royal College of Surgeons of England and published in 2020.

The new one-page synopsis summarises the recommended treatments for seven types of infection, including indications for the use of antimicrobials, and the first choice antimicrobial where use is indicated, with dosages and duration for adult patients.

Page references are indicated and a QR code included so that users can quickly and easily consult the appropriate section in the full guidance document, which also includes recommendations for other

conditions, second choice antimicrobials (in case, for example, of penicillin allergy), dosages for children and hospital patients, consideration of medically compromised patients, and guidance on prophylactic prescribing for the prevention of local and distant site infections.

Dr Wendy Thompson PhD FCGDent, the College of General Dentistry's lead on antimicrobial prescribing and stewardship, and the lead developer of the synopsis, said: 'The scale of the problem of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections cannot be overstated. They already kill more people worldwide than HIV and malaria combined, and they will cause more deaths than cancer within a generation.

'By prescribing antibiotics only when strictly necessary, dental practitioners can keep antibiotics working and ultimately save lives. Using the new synopsis as an *aide mémoire*, and referring to the full guidelines as necessary, will help them to do so.'

Antimicrobial prescribing in dentistry: good practice guidelines is available to view online free of charge, and the new one-page synopsis is also available free of charge to download and print.

Both can be found at <https://cgdent.uk/standards-guidance/>. ✦