

REFLECTION ON MY MAMMOGRAPHY COURSE AND THE DIFFERENCE THE BURSARY MADE TO MY STUDY.

My decision to study mammography at a post graduate level is precisely based on my choice of career pathway. Although six years of professional work experience in the field of radiography with a Master of Science degree in radiography has given me the vast knowledge to cope with the challenges of radiography as a senior radiographer, my interest goes beyond general radiography, and, specifically in mammography.

The reasons why I have chosen mammography ahead of other fields are professional as well as personal, being a female (who knows the plight of womanhood in a male dominated African society) is an added motivation. Also the loss of an aunt through breast cancer was another reason why I have chosen this field. Notwithstanding, there is a growing consciousness and demand for the use of current mammographic equipment in the health sector. With these come a challenge for infrastructural upgrade and the demand for more professionals with a reasonable degree of expertise. Practically, this means having adequate professional expertise to enable early diagnosis and prevention of life threatening diseases such as breast cancer which is currently on the rise in Nigeria. To achieve excellence in mammography in what is currently a fast growing profession, I needed clinical competence in mammography as well as developing strategic thinking skills and an ability to adapt to change.

My search for a centre where I would be trained to be a mammographer as an international student led me to Breast Test Wales which offered me an honorary contract for my mammography training. I accepted this opportunity to work with them for a one year period. However, I was limited due to funding after an initial deposit to start the programme. However, after meeting one of the members of the Symposium Mammographicum in BTW proved to be the turning point in my mammography study as she directed me to apply to Symposium Mammographicum from which I received full details required for their bursary. Following my successful application, the charity's Trustees awarded me with financial support, which helped with the placement fees. Without this finance, it would have been difficult to properly conclude my program as I had received reminders earlier to meet with the payment deadline. The bursary came as a huge relief.

Looking back on the mammography course with Cardiff University and my training in BTW, the course offered me the opportunity to have a quality hands-on training in BTW on the women invited for breast screening and also on the patients being assessed further for appropriate diagnosis after the breast screening.

The course also offered me the opportunity to undertake two assignments.

1. Quality control of the mammography equipment. Reflecting on the first assignment, I had the opportunity to learn quality control as an important framework for clinical diagnosis which ensures optimal performance of Digital Mammography equipment for high image quality at Mean Glandular Dose to the patient. Discussing some of the recommended tests for the different

equipment helped me to understand the different manufacturers' specifications and their guidelines.

2. The second assignment gave me the opportunity of following a breast cancer patient through her treatment pathway. The experience offered me the knowledge and value of attending Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings, the importance of correlating the mammographic abnormalities with histology and how the test results influence breast cancer decision making. I learned the value of shared decision making and allowing the patient to make informed decision. Observing a patient through her treatment pathway gave me a greater insight into the breast cancer diagnosis and treatment outcomes which I didn't have initial understanding of, such as ways of reducing the psychological impact of breast cancer on the patient.

Also I have been able to identify the importance of using patient centred care through appropriate communication skills. Showing empathy to work with my patients in their particular circumstance helped me not only to reduce the patient's anxiety but improve their ability to comply in undergoing a range of procedures, resulting in high satisfaction level, a positive outcome for both the patient and the healthcare system. The whole experience has been highly educational as I now consider the impact of my attitude towards my breast cancer patients while attending to them. I feel more confident when dealing with these patients as I'm now aware what they are going through. This experience has improved my personal and professional role as a mammographer in patient care extensively. This would not have been possible without the funding from Mammographicum Symposium.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Zebby Rees especially for her support during my mammography course, Andrew Tillbrook the company secretary and other members of the Symposium Mammographicum team for the bursary payment. Thank you all for your support.

Danimi Jean Bestman, Senior Radiographer,
University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital,
River State, Nigeria

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