

Chernor H Jallow Review Interview with Trustee Jane Gay December 2018

Chernor Jallow, a nurse and public health officer at the clinic, is in his second year of a 4 year BSc. Public & Environmental Health Sciences at the University of The Gambia. He is the first recipient of the Brendon Bursary and a most worthy recipient indeed, as I discovered last week when I spent time with him during his busy schedule at the clinic.

Chernor is the eldest of 6 and the first in his family to access higher education. He is hoping to set an example for his siblings and will be instrumental in providing support (financial as well as academic) for them as they plan their futures.

When asked how the bursary was helping him he told me that it, “plugs the gaps”. What did he mean by this?

He pays his fees incrementally and he needs to buy credit for his mobile so that he can access lecture presentations and other study materials. Travelling to different campuses is something of a burden too - physically and financially. The bursary has allowed him to manage all of these factors. “I’m coping “ he told me smiling.

He studies at home between 4 and 6 in the morning using a 7 year old laptop when he has access to power. Power cuts are a regular feature in The Gambia. His working hours at the clinic are, necessarily, flexible and enable him to attend his lectures. Needless to say, when required, for example during the Malaria season, Chernor manages to get to the clinic after classes to see to patients. His relationship with TJ (Clinic Manager) is key to his work/study/life balance. TJ negotiates shifts to advantage of both the Clinic and Chernor’s other commitments.

All clinics in The Gambia should have a Senior Public Health Officer on the staff. Chernor is working towards that status as he is studying on a BSc in Public & Environmental Health Sciences. This semester, which is 6 months in duration, his 6 module choices are:

Human Functional Anatomy 2

Bio Statistics in Public Health Practices

Waste Management

Epidemiology and Disease Control

Introduction to Management (Compulsory)

Micro Biology

French 101/102 (Compulsory)

When asked what his favourite module was, he had no hesitation in replying, "Epidemiology and Disease Control" and then added, “and I love Micro Biology - I spent yesterday in the lab”. Fortunately, he recounted, the Human Anatomy module is one he can enjoy because his SEN qualification and clinical working experience has and continues to provide him with a sound knowledge base.

Each of these modules require him to take paper exams - to date his grades are exemplary A/A+. His tutor is accessible and willing to meet with Chernor regularly and is in email contact. The course tutor is inspirational and has high expectations of Chernor, a challenge which Chernor is keen to seize. Chernor intends to maintain his high grades.

Chernor has a wide network of colleagues who he can call on for advice and guidance using his mobile phone, as essential in some ways, as a stethoscope in his practice. While we were talking he received a couple of calls about patients which he answered calmly and professionally. He spoke of the need to be in touch with other clinicians to ensure best practice. He also uses his phone during consultations if he thinks he can fast track patients he is sending for further drugs or treatment at other hospitals.

And as if what I have relayed above is not a pretty full weekly schedule, Chernor also steps up to do voluntary work on Sundays with a friend’s “Eyecare For All” charity.

Chernor is exceptional in many ways; his commitment to delivering the highest health care to his patients; his motivation to succeed and excel on his degree course; and his unstinting contribution to the team at the clinic demonstrate why he is a worthy recipient of the Brendon Bursary.

Jane Gay December 2018