

A Deeper Look..... looking into the lives of people and projects that are making a difference in Malawi.....

Always Follow Your Dreams and Fight for Them

Dr Wakisa Mulwafu, Malawi's only ENT specialist talks to Thengo Kavinya about his life and profession



An ear, nose and throat specialist (ENT) is a physician trained in the medical and surgical treatment of the ears, nose throat, and related structures of the head and neck. They have special expertise in managing diseases of the ears, nose and nasal passage sinuses, larynx (voice box), oral cavity and upper pharynx (mouth and throat), as well as structures of the neck and face. Dr Wakisa Mulwafu is the only specialist in Malawi and he explains more.

Born in Chitipa and a fifth born in a family of eight, Dr. Mulwafu went to Iponjola Primary School and proceeded to Chaminade secondary school. There he was selected to do further studies at Chancellor College, where he did two years in the faculty of bachelor of science and then joined College of Medicine where he obtained his MBBS. From College of Medicine, Wakisa did his internship at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital for two years and transferred to Kamuzu Central Hospital where he worked as a registrar in surgery for another two years. He specialized as an ENT surgeon at the University of Cape town, where he did general surgery for one year and four years in ENT.

Asked why he chose to specialize in ENT, Dr. Mulwafu reveals that it was out of interest. "When I was doing my MBBS, we had Dr. Nakakande Kyambande from Uganda, unfortunately

she passed away and she greatly motivated me to specialize in ENT. I also discovered during my college days that Malawi needed an ENT surgeon, because there were lots of people with ear and nose problems that were overlooked but could be treated".

Dr Mulwafu reveals that he usually has a busy week from Monday to Friday. His day starts at 7:00, sometimes even earlier. As he is employed by the College of Medicine, every morning he listens to student's presentations from 7:45am. Every Monday and Wednesday, he does ward rounds in the morning at the general ENT clinic and in the afternoon in the throat and voice clinic. On Tuesday he operates the whole day at queens. On Thursdays, he does private work at Blantyre Adventist hospital and on Fridays he teaches at College of Medicine.

He believes lack of medical supplies is the major challenge in his profession. "Lack of supplies is a big problem in most government hospitals. My work is also extremely demanding at the moment because I am the only ENT specialist in the country and I have no one to support me".

One of Wakisa's big plans in his profession is capacity building. "I would like build capacity as much as possible. I have plans to build infrastructure in Lilongwe where I can be meeting patients from the central and northern region".

Asked what advice he could offer any medical practitioner aspiring for a similar career, Wakisa says it is a good and rewarding career even though it takes time to pursue, its worth it. "It is a good and interesting field with a wide range of activities both microscopic and macroscopic surgery and also medical treatment apart from surgery."

Dr. Mulwafu says he likes reading novels during his free time and hanging around with friends in his neighbourhood. He enjoys novels very much and his favourite book is The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho.

His last words, Dr Mulwafu says he is proud to be part of the dynamic medical school with great future and training. "I am very privileged to be part of the training team and this is quite a good challenge.

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