

Profile Interview



Professor Genesis Chorwe-Sungani talks to Thengo Kavinya on his career

Background: Your academic journey

I graduated from Kamuzu College of Nursing with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2001 and later did my Master of Nursing (Mental Health) at the University of KwaZulu Natal in 2010. I obtained my Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing (Perinatal Mental Health) at the University of the Western Cape in 2018. I joined University of Malawi as an Assistant Lecturer in 2005 and have grown through ranks over years to become an Associate Professor in Mental Health Nursing in 2019.

Any personal aspects that has helped to shape the person you are today

I am a person who loves reading and writing. Growing up I used to watch combat and action movies which somehow taught me perseverance, self-reliance and appropriate use of team work when you want to execute a task.

What led you to develop interest in the field you are in now?

Generally, my mum encouraged me to join nursing profession. Further, when I was in college training as a nurse, one night, I listened to a radio programme hosted by late Tailosi Bakili on MBC Radio 2, in which he talked about incarceration of Alpha Blondy at a Psychiatric Unit and his encounter with a nurse called Fanta Diallo. Upon discharge he went on to compose a reggae tune titled "Sweet Fanta Diallo" to express his gratitude for the care he received. I was moved to go out and make a difference in the life of individuals with mental health problems.

What does your work entail and how would you describe it in the Malawi hospital setting?

I am a mental health nurse and my work involves conducting mental health assessment, providing mental health nursing care which include assisting patients and their families with self-care activities, medication management, psychoeducation, counselling and psychosocial rehabilitation to just mention a few. I also conduct mental health promotion activities in various community settings such as workplaces, schools, prisons and churches.

What are your areas of particular clinical interest?

My area of interest is perinatal mental health that is mental health of women during pregnancy to one year after giving birth.

What do you see as the greatest need currently facing the Mental Health System in the country?

Malawi have to move away from centralised mental health services at tertiary level and having mental health care services to be fully integrated into general health care delivery system at primary level so that services are easily accessible by communities.

What's the most challenging/rewarding about what you do?

The most challenging thing about my work is to deal with stigma associated with mental illness which is also usually attached to individuals and facilities that provide care to the persons with these conditions.

The most rewarding thing about my work is to see a person who was acutely ill recovering from their illness.

What are your dreams/goals for the future?

My dream is to establish a private practice to provide perinatal mental health care services and general mental health care services.

What advice would you give someone considering your career?

A person should have passion and willingness to care for individuals with mental health problems with minimal available resources.

What else would you like people to know about what you do?

Currently, I am the first ever and only male to be promoted to the rank of Associate Professor of Nursing at then UNIMA and now KUHeS. I am a researcher and I supervise research for postgraduate students at KUHeS and other international Universities.

Outside hospital, hobbies and things you are passionate about

I love playing volleyball and Nguli. I also enjoy listen to conscious reggae vibes during my free time.

