



# From ACCRA, GHANA to ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA

MY MAYO CLINIC EXPERIENCE **Sally Afua Bampoh, MD**  
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» MY COUNTRY, GHANA, HAS A HIGH BURDEN OF CHRONIC HEPATITIS B INFECTION, with increasing incidence of complications like hepatocellular carcinoma and cirrhosis, the bulk of which are managed at my hospital, the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital, which is the premiere hospital in the country and located in the capital city, Accra. There is also an increase in the number of patients presenting with other gastrointestinal (GI) conditions like inflammatory bowel disease. However, there are very few qualified gastroenterologists, with most of them being trained in other countries. The Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons only began sub-specialty training a few years ago.

As a gastroenterology trainee, my desire was to be exposed to novel areas in GI and hepatology, gain insight into the use of available modern technology, and to encourage the necessary authorities to acquire such tools. I also sought to improve my knowledge in research and to form a collaboration with foreign faculty to help research into various diseases affecting my country, develop solutions for these conditions, and contribute to available data on prevailing conditions.

This led me to apply for the position of a visiting fellow in the USA. Mayo Clinic Rochester was the obvious choice because I had previously come into contact with Dr. Lewis Roberts, who had done a lot of research into hepatobiliary cancers. With the help of the ACG, which awarded me with the 2016 International GI Training Grant, my trip to the Mayo Clinic became a reality.

On the September 19, 2016, I reported at the Mayo Clinic as a Visiting International Fellow for six months, a period that was divided equally between clinical and research periods. The Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology at Mayo is well structured into smaller, specialized clinics, which makes the training in all aspects of GI easy. During the clinical period, I rotated through these specialized clinics and observed conditions that were not common in my part of the world, and learned how such conditions were managed. My best times during the clinical period were the days spent in the procedure rooms learning about ERCP, EUS, therapeutic endoscopies, manometry, etc. The clinical period helped reform me as a doctor and improved my relationship with my patients, which improves outcomes. The last three months of my training were spent in research, where I was involved in the ongoing clinical research on hepatocellular cancers. I was trained on developing and initiating research ideas and also on how to analyze data. This was very beneficial as I was having challenges with my dissertation, which is a mandatory requirement for my fellowship training. The knowledge acquired during this period empowered me to complete my proposal on “Non-

Alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease in Type 2 Diabetes,” and the actual work began in December 2017.

Indeed, the period spent at Mayo Clinic exposed me to a world of modern technology and advanced research, and this has been beneficial to my practice as a doctor and as a trainee in GI and hepatology. I also got the opportunity to attend conferences aimed at mentoring and career progression in clinical practice and education.

To the countless number of people who contributed to making this dream a reality, I express my heartfelt appreciation. I am grateful especially to ACG (in full please), Prof. Jacob Plange-Rhule, Rector of the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons, Dr. Mitch Mahmoud of Duke University, Dr. Mark Topazian of Mayo Clinic Rochester, and Jo Meyers and Rebecca Williams of Mayo Clinic. A special thank you to all the fellows and research coordinators I worked with, especially Dr. Thoetchai Peeraphatdit (Bee). Lastly, to my mentor Dr. Lewis Roberts of Mayo Clinic, who still encourages me and has formed collaboration with my unit in Ghana to research into various conditions. I say “AYEKOO” to all these persons and all those I could not mention.