

My Role as a Clinical Research Nurse...

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Where did your passion for nursing begin?...

While growing up, my dad related to me his experience with nurses in a private hospital he attended in Nigeria, which gave him the impression that Nurses are the most humble and kind-hearted people on earth. I also lived in a compound where I had two mothers who were nurses as my neighbours. They willingly attended to provide care for all who fall sick in the neighbourhood. This stimulated my interest and attracted me to the nursing profession. I nevertheless applied for university admission as well as for Nursing school admission. I was offered a place to attend both University and the Anambra State School of Nursing, Nkpor. I chose the latter after extensive consultation and career advice. On my graduation as a Registered Nurse and Midwife, I worked in the following hospitals: Glory to God Hospital IselleUku, Delta state; Regina Caeli Hospital Awka, Anambra state; Lagoon Hospital Lagos, Lagos state and presently at Enugu State University Teaching Hospital Parklane, Enugu (all based in Nigeria).

...Tell us about your journey into clinical research?

In 2015, staff at Parklane hospital, Enugu went on strike. Not wishing to remain idle, I toured Enugu in search of private hospitals where I could assist during the industrial action. I came across Chiolive International Medical Research Organization (CIMRO). I found out that Research Nurses were required. I was duly interviewed and I began working as a Clinical Research Nurse and later as a Clinical Research Coordinator. The principal investigator, at CIMRO, Prof C.P Chijioko mentored me in how to become a competent Research Nurse. He also sponsored me to attend workshops and seminars on Clinical Trials, Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement.

In 2018, I met Mr Ralueke Ekezie, the Chief Executive Officer of Blue Torch who told me they were organizing free research workshops for Nurses under the umbrella of the Global Research Nurses Network. I attended the two-day workshop which increased my interest in research and added much meaning to what I had previously been exposed to in our research centre. That was the first time I attended a workshop mainly organized to encourage and promote nurses' participation and skills in research. Our relationship continued after the workshop as he visited our CIMRO unit and encouraged me in what I was doing. In 2019, he organized another workshop, during which he invited me to make a presentation on my role as a Clinical Research Nurse, which I happily accepted.

What do you do in your Clinical Research Coordinator role for CIMRO?...

As CRC I take directives from the Principal Investigator (PI) and I work hard to ensure that assessments are done on appropriate dates by negotiating with participants and assessors. I am the closest investigator/researcher to the study participants, I report any mishaps such as sickness, illness, hospital admission or death of any study participants to the wider team, and I also advocate on behalf of participants. I organize home visits for end point assessments of participants, and for those who wish to withdraw from the study. I also disseminate information and meeting invitations to the team members.

...How does your role vary as a Clinical Research Nurse?

I work in close relationship with the PI and the participants, I ensure recruits are eligible for the study, and develop an important rapport with the participants. I explain the purpose and procedures of the study to them. This allows them to make an informed choice and if willing, consent to participate. I guide the participants on completing the informed consent form and guide them on filling in the biodata recruitment form. I measure the participants' blood pressures and anthropometric parameters and I enter these data into the spreadsheet, for the electronic data files stored on the computer. I also organize maintenance and repair of our BP measuring equipment. I organize clinical validation of home BP monitors by comparing them with automated office blood pressure monitors (AOBP).

Can you describe your journey so far in clinical research?...

I love clinical research, developing more interest day-by-day as a practising clinical nurse as well as undertaking research. Being a research nurse makes me an advocate between participants and research team members, thereby ensuring protection of participant's interests. I look forward to receiving training that will make me a certified clinical research nurse enabling me to mentor other nurses in the field and role of research. I also look forward to becoming a research nurse supervisor/manager in future.

...What would be your key message to other nurses interested in research?

Clinical research is the key to finding solutions to the numerous challenges in the health sector. It holds our future and nurses have much to contribute. Clinical research would promote nurses' career progress, enabling them to update their knowledge and offer better patient care. The research role is exciting and interesting, dynamic and challenging, demanding a wide range of skills. Moreover, to help establish a positive research culture, hospital authorities should also reward nurses who show interest and make effort in conducting research and incorporating research findings into their practice.