

HOW TO... DELIVER INNOVATION

Uthman Adesina and **Bala Sirigireddy** have been selected for the NHS Clinical Entrepreneur programme. Uthman talks through the process, while Bala gives his top tips for success.

The NHS Clinical Entrepreneur programme is an opportunity for health professionals to develop their entrepreneurial aspirations through a national-level training programme.

The overall aim is to equip us as health professionals with the skills, knowledge, experience and leadership capacity needed to deliver on the promise of digital health, genomics, data analytics, advanced technology and social networks for the NHS.

Retaining this talent pool drives up the quality of clinical care delivery and directly boosts the NHS's contribution to the economic growth agenda.

The curriculum covers: an overview of accounting; value creation and valuation; research; board meetings; teams; early failure; compliance and regulation; investors; intellectual property; sales and marketing; the development cycle;

funding rounds; the documents; case studies of entrepreneurs; and an overview of how to build a start up.

Applying for the programme

The application process involved submitting a CV, two references focusing on your entrepreneurial activity, a letter supporting your application from your own training lead or manager and a one-minute video showing your "elevator pitch" for your developing clinical innovation.

The application form covered general information, such as your name and occupation, but it also asked specific questions about your clinical and entrepreneurial ambitions, and also had a section for the description of the entrepreneurial ideas or proposals and how these would

improve patient outcomes and care.

Once successful with the application, you are then required to attend an interview. The interview is segmented into three separate areas with the following themes:

Section 1: A one-minute presentation of your elevator pitch to explain why they should be engaging with you and your concept.

Section 2: Gauging your understanding of the term "leadership" within an entrepreneurial field. Exploring examples of when you have taken a lead role within a team and what you have learnt about yourself.

Section 3: Evaluating your experience of producing a programme or project in the workplace to a deadline.

On successful completion of all the steps, you are accepted on to the programme.



What the programme offers

It offers mentoring and coaching from a range of acclaimed international faculties, along with entrepreneurial placements and the facilitation of relationships with commercial organisations to develop their business and procurement knowledge. It also provides commercially relevant opportunities including expert webinars, video content, e-learning and flexible university interoperable/recognised accredited modules that can be used towards PGCert, PGDip, Masters and undergraduate/intercolated qualifications for interested students. Finally, funding and connecting to investment sources.

Why did I join the programme?

As an HCPC-registered scientist with first-hand experience of the trials and tribulations faced in biomedical scientist

career pathways, I saw the programme as an opportunity to try and create something which would help bridge the gap between theoretical and practical advice for healthcare scientists at different stages of their career.

I am passionate about being a healthcare scientist – we make up approximately 5% of the NHS workforce, but have an impact in 80% of clinical decisions in the NHS. I believe recruitment and retention are essential in moving the NHS forward as we enter the era of personalised medicine.

Having been on the programme for a few months, I have been able to start actualising my idea (sci-connect.com). I had no initial experience of where to start or what to do, but with the help of the programme conveners and my allocated mentor I have begun developing new skills, which is benefiting the construction of the site and I hope will eventually be of benefit to laboratory staff.

During the development of my concept, I faced different challenges to those I am used to in the laboratory. One of the things I took home after my first meet-up session on the programme was to be prepared to have many failures along the way and to think outside the box.

Since then I have attended various events, from "hackathons" to networking with some of the best digital health companies in Europe. I probably would not have had these opportunities in my routine line of work. The programme has taken me out of my comfort zone but I am enjoying the challenge and would encourage other scientists to consider applying for future intakes. 

Uthman Adesina is an Advanced Specialist Biomedical Scientist, who specialises in histocompatibility and immunogenetics at NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) Tooting. **Bala Sirigireddy** is the Head of Haematology and Blood Transfusion at Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.



TOP TIPS

- ✓ Innovation must aim to solve a problem with a novel method or product that makes a difference
- ✓ I develop ideas by connecting advancements in technology with real-world problems. Doing this in my immediate environment is quicker than starting from scratch
- ✓ Learn to innovate by applying techniques such as SCAMPER: Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to another use, Eliminate and Reverse
- ✓ I gained experience in innovation by learning about various technologies through likeminded people and networks. I then developed the idea further by being curious about its applicability. The idea is shared with stakeholders, such as clinicians, nurses and patients. Once we are certain of the benefits the idea could bring, we move to build a product or service
- ✓ The journey gets difficult at times: handle these situations with support from colleagues, friends and family. The desire to make a difference keeps you going
- ✓ Innovation comes to life during the entrepreneurial journey. The problem/solution market fit is realised in real time, and the best solution survives the competition and gains good recognition
- ✓ NHS England has a road map to help budding entrepreneurs: bit.ly/NHS_roadmap