

# Spotlight on: Toyosi Atoyebi

Nursing now  
Ireland

'It is through research that we develop new models of care'

AS A clinical research nurse at the Heart-Beat Trust in St Michael's Hospital, Dun Laoghaire and secretary of the INMO International Section, Toyosi Atoyebi exudes intelligence and passion for her work. However nursing was not Ms Atoyebi's first career choice. She started her work life as a journalist in her native Nigeria, also working as a banker before moving to Ireland almost 20 years ago.

Ms Atoyebi's mother always wanted her to be a nurse, noticing her empathy and care for older people from a young age. On moving to Ireland, Ms. Atoyebi worked in patient services, patient accounts and clinical coding (HIPE) at St Vincent's University Hospital.

Ms Atoyebi fell in love with the clinical and medical world and was inspired to complete a master's degree in health informatics at Trinity College. She went on to complete a diploma in clinical and transitional research at UCD.

While working alongside nurses at St Vincent's Hospital, Ms Atoyebi's first-hand experiences of caring for patients really struck a chord with her.

"This feeling was fuelled in no small measure by my mum's wish for me to become a nurse. I was a bit reluctant about a change as I loved my job at St Vincent's. I had a good career but I didn't feel like I was fulfilling my purpose. In 2013 I made the decision to return to college. I went to UCD and spent four years studying nursing."

Ms Atoyebi started her new career at the Beacon Hospital in Dublin and says this was her foundation in nursing. From there she moved to TCD to work on The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) project, work which was put on hold due to Covid-19 as the study's participants were all in the at-risk category. Initially, Ms Atoyebi worked from home before being redeployed to the HeartBeat Trust.

"The beauty of research nursing is that you get to move from one site to another, bringing your skills and knowledge with you. The world is evolving every day and research is something that I love. Everything we do is evidence based

and the data we collect are used for policy formation. Research is the backbone of healthcare policy. It is through research that we develop new models of care," she said.

Ms Atoyebi would like to see more nurses in politics and feels that the role of Minister for Health would be greatly enhanced if it was filled by a nurse. She feels that nurses' skills in mentorship, respect, professionalism and management mean that they are well equipped for leadership roles. She would like to see more professionals who work directly with patients in decision-making roles and believes that this would lead to a more streamlined and efficient health service.

Citing the role nurses are playing fighting Covid-19, Ms Atoyebi said: "Logical and critical thinking are crucial components of nursing practice and these traits make for good leaders. Nurses are a key part of care delivery and thus should be in leadership roles. Nurses represent the largest discipline in healthcare. We cannot keep undermining them by not giving them a seat at the leadership table. If nurses are given this opportunity things are going to turn around quickly, and we will see great improvements in healthcare."

Ms Atoyebi is passionate about equality, fairness and justice. In every profession she has worked in she has joined a trade union. She believes it is essential for every nurse to be a member of a union as it provides a united voice, supports ongoing education and allows access to a network of peers.

"Trade unionism and the INMO, for me, are about community, advocacy and a body that speaks for and listens to every nurse. It's a place of identity for nurses where we all understand each other. Being in a union not only supports the nurse but the whole healthcare system. Look at the work of the union during the pandemic; they really supported their members, they stood up for us, met with the Minister and Department of Health on our behalf, demanded appropriate PPE and safe conditions. It really is essential that nurses and midwives join the INMO."

Ms Atoyebi feels that change needs to



Toyosi Atoyebi: "It's time nurses got the recognition and pay we deserve for the work that we do."

happen within nursing, and soon. She is acutely aware that it is difficult to recruit and retain nurses in the Irish health service due to low wages and under-resourcing, and says it is not surprising that qualified nurses and midwives are leaving Ireland to work abroad when conditions and pay do not match international best practice. Ultimately, she advocates for better pay.

"One thing that we really need to work on is this issue of compassion fatigue. We hear phrase used frequently in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. It amounts to burnout, so while discussing the crisis of increased demand in healthcare we need to acknowledge burnout. The workforce is over stretched. We do not have enough beds or equipment, but neither do we have the emotional energy at times because nurses are so burned out.

"It feels like we are sitting on a ticking time bomb and one day it is going to explode. It's time nurses got the recognition and pay we deserve for the work that we do. These are two things that would make a huge difference."

*This article is part of our Nursing Now series. Nursing Now is a worldwide campaign that aims to achieve recognition of nurses' contribution to healthcare, gender equality, the economy and wider society. The aim of the campaign is to improve health globally by raising the profile of nurses worldwide and influencing policymakers and supporting nurses to lead, learn and build a global movement. For more information visit [www.nursingnowireland.ie](http://www.nursingnowireland.ie)*