

## ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

### Joseph Lubega, M.D., M.S., C.P.E.



#### Career Description

**1. Current position:**

- Assistant Professor, Baylor College of Medicine
- Associate Director, Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Fellowship Program, Global HOPE-Makerere University College of Health Sciences
- Vice Chair, Global Health SIG, ASPHO

**2. Institution:** Baylor College of Medicine, Texas Children's Hospital, Global HOPE Program

**3. Years at institution:** 2011 – current

**4. Did you complete additional post-fellowship training? Was it an important factor in your current position?**

Yes.

- Research fellowship in Pediatric Cancer Epidemiology and Control, National Institutes of Health - National Cancer Institute
- Master of Science in Public Health, University of Texas
- Certified Physician Executive, Certifying Commission in Medical Management/American Association of Physician Leadership

Yes, my training in pediatric cancer epidemiology, public health, and medical leadership influenced my current role focused on strategies to improve outcomes of pediatric cancer, sickle cell disease, and other blood disorders at an organizational and national or global scale.

**5. Years out of Fellowship:** 6 years

**6. Type of institution:** Academic center, global capacity-building non-profit program

**7. Approximate number of attendings in your PHO department/division:** 160

**8. How do you allocate your effort? (\*Please provide a % for each area)**

Clinical 10%, Scholarship 40%, Education 30%, Administration 20%

**9. Position Specifics (Please give a brief description of your current responsibilities in these areas)**

**a. Clinical activity**

Lead multidisciplinary team in care of children with cancer and blood diseases at Texas Children's Hospital

Guide clinical programs development in emerging pediatric hematology-oncology centers that are affiliated with the Global HOPE program in sub-Saharan Africa.

**b. Scholarship/Research** Implementation research and clinical research to adapt current

## ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

evidence-based treatment and organization of pediatric cancer and blood diseases control to low/middle income country settings.

Comparative pediatric cancer omics across genetically or environmentally unique populations to discover requisite alterations that underpin pediatric cancer and unique factors to inform adaptation of diagnostic and treatment strategies.

- c. Education/Teaching** Lead educational and operational activities of the Global HOPE-Makerere University College of Health Sciences pediatric hematology-oncology fellowship program.

Design and guide implementation of multidisciplinary educational programs and curricula related to pediatric hematology-oncology capacity-building in low/middle income country settings.

- d. Administration** Support pediatric hematology-oncology capacity-building program development in low/middle income country settings including facilitating relationships with governments, philanthropy, and academia.

- e. Other** N/A

### Career Perspectives

- 1. What were important factors in your taking on this role (e.g., professional interest, family, geography, spousal profession)? What made this career path appealing?**

As a medical graduate from Africa, I had firsthand experience of the neglect and devastation faced by families with sickle cell disease, hemophilia, cancer, and other not typical “tropical diseases”. Because of this, I decided to pursue world-class medical training in pediatric hematology-oncology to make a systemic difference on the outcomes of children and families affected by these diseases in Africa.

- 2. Is there specific training or experience that helped you obtain this position?**

Perhaps the pivotal experience that propelled me into the world of pediatric hematology-oncology was my third-year medical school elective in pediatric oncology in 1999 under the tutelage of Dr. Ed Mbidde – one of the most eminent oncologists ever in Uganda. On the one hand, I learned great deal from him about being a medical professional; on the other hand, I observed the devastation that families of children affected by serious chronic diseases go through. Whereas much of my medical school experience emphasized knowledge and skills in acute management of classical tropical infections such as malaria, pneumonia, diarrheal diseases in children, I was drawn to the complex world chronic non-communicable diseases.

## ASPHO Career Path Spotlight

### 3. Is this career path what you expected? Please explain.

Yes and no. Yes, in that I not only envisioned an academic career in pediatric hematology-oncology from earlier on in my medical training, but I also spent an enormous amount of personal resources to achieve it. For me, becoming a certified pediatric hematologist-oncologist involved migrating from Uganda to England, and then to the USA where I had to repeat a pediatrics residency before joining a pediatric-hematology oncology fellowship program. It took me twelve years from graduating from medical school to graduate from fellowship!

By the time I completed my fellowship in pediatric hematology-oncology, I had become pessimistic that I would ever achieve the motivation needed to develop this field in Africa. However, my graduation from fellowship coincided with Texas Children's Hospital's and Baylor College of Medicine's initiative to build capacity for pediatric hematology-oncology in sub-Saharan Africa and obligation to bridge the gap between the excellent outcomes of children in the USA and those in Africa. I felt like my entire career and training had been preparing me for this kind of opportunity!

### 4. What do you find most rewarding about your current professional role?

Making an impact! It is an exceptional privilege to be able to make an impact on the lives of children, families, and health professionals on a continental scale.

### 5. What do you find most challenging about your current professional role?

Working in a global setting requires one think and operate simultaneously in multiple medical, socio-economic, cultural, and political cultures. It can be dizzying! On the other hand, it also teaches one to constantly strip issues down to the core, i.e., to focus on what is truly important for the patients and their families.

### 6. What do you see yourself doing in 5 years and 10 years?

Leading a cooperative group or organization of teams of multidisciplinary professionals involved in clinical care, education, and research for pediatric cancer, sickle cell disease, and blood disorders across Africa. Developing and implementing evidence-based care, using low-cost cutting edge technologies to care for the children, expanding access to care through training and reliable supplies of medicines. Advocating for children's hospitals to provide complex care, training, and research for Africa's most precious and abundant gems – the children.