IHPN
IGBO HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS NETWORK (UK)

ISSUE 1 • OCTOBER 2026

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

2026

Igbo Excellence in Healthcare, *Medicine & Innovation*

Celebrating five pioneers, scientists and global health leaders of Igbo heritage, and what their stories mean for the next generation.

INSIDE THIS EDITION

BO
Dr Bennet Omalu
BRAIN HEALTH

FU
Prof Fabian Udekwu
CARDIAC SURGERY

UA
Prof Uche Amazigo
PUBLIC HEALTH

IU
Prof Dame Ijeoma Uchegbu
PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCE

OO
Prof Onyema Ogbuagu
INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Cover image: AI-generated illustration

The next consultant. The next professor. The next matron. The next medical director. The next healthcare innovator. They may already be among us.

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE • A FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

LEADERSHIP NOTE

A message from our Founder & President

Black History Month is more than remembrance. It is a chance to recognise what becomes possible when talent, resilience and service are given room to flourish. This special edition celebrates five healthcare figures of Igbo heritage whose work has shaped medicine, research and public health far beyond their own careers.

IHPN-UK was founded on 28 August 2026, and this is our very first newsletter. Their stories remind us that progress is built across professions and generations. At IHPN-UK, we believe heritage should lead to action: mentoring the next generation, sharing knowledge, opening doors, building partnerships and helping healthcare professionals grow into the leaders their patients, organisations and communities need.

When I read these stories, I see people who look like us, who once stood where our newly qualified colleagues stand today. The best way to honour them is to lift someone else as we climb. As you read, I invite you to see both responsibility and possibility, and to turn inspiration into purposeful action.

With pride in our heritage and confidence in our future,

Ebele Nwosu
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, IHPN-UK

In this edition

3 **Dr Bennet Omalu** — Brain injury & CTE

3 **Prof Fabian Udekwu** — Open-heart surgery in Nigeria

4 **Prof Uche Amazigo** — Community-led public health

4 **Prof Dame Ijeoma Uchegbu** — Drug delivery science

4 **Prof Onyema Ogbuagu** — Vaccines & antivirals

5 **Who we are** — Our members & our sector in numbers

6 **IHPN-UK in practice** — From celebration to action

Visibility
Celebrate excellence that should be seen, known and remembered.

Legacy
Connect today's achievements to tomorrow's leadership.

Action
Turn inspiration into mentoring, collaboration and service.







Illustrations: AI-generated images from IHPN-UK's introductory video

FEATURED LEADERS

Stories of impact

BO

CTE

Landmark 2005 research on brain damage from repeated head impacts

BRAIN HEALTH

Dr Bennet Omalu

Physician, forensic pathologist and researcher

The doctor who changed the conversation on brain injury

While working as a medical examiner in the United States, Nigerian-born Dr Omalu identified abnormal brain changes in former professional American football players and published landmark research in 2005 on chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

He pursued questions that challenged established thinking, and brought the long-term effects of repeated head impacts into clinical, sporting and public debate.

> **Lesson for us:** Follow the evidence, even when it is unpopular.

Source: Omalu et al., Neurosurgery, 2005

CARDIAC SURGERY

Professor Fabian Udekwu

Cardiothoracic surgeon, UNTH Enugu

Pioneer of open-heart surgery in Nigeria

At the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH), Enugu, Professor Udekwu led the Nigerian surgical team that, with international colleagues, performed the country's first open-heart operation.

His lasting legacy is institution-building: developing surgical capacity, supporting specialist teams and creating a pathway for advanced cardiothoracic practice in Nigeria.

> **Lesson for us:** Breakthroughs last when you build the team around them.

Source: Eze & Ezemba, Texas Heart Institute Journal, 2007

FU

1974

Nigeria's first open-heart operation

?

YOUR TURN

Which of these stories inspires you most, and who would you add? Tell us on TikTok @ihpnuk or email ihpnuk@outlook.com.

WE MAY FEATURE YOUR ANSWER IN A FUTURE EDITION

FEATURED LEADERS

From neglected tropical diseases to drug-delivery science and infectious-disease research, these careers show how specialist expertise becomes population-level impact.

UA

2012
Prince Mahidol Award in Public Health

PUBLIC HEALTH

Professor Uche Amazigo

Former Director, WHO African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control

Transforming public health through community action

Professor Amazigo's research revealed the social cost of river blindness, especially for women and girls. As Director of the WHO's African Programme for Onchocerciasis Control, she championed community-directed treatment, putting local people at the heart of delivering ivermectin.

> **Lesson for us:** Treat communities as partners, not passive recipients.

Source: Profile: Uche Amazigo, PubMed Central, 2022

PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCE

Professor Dame Ijeoma Uchegbu

Professor of Pharmaceutical Nanoscience, UCL

Innovating drug delivery and widening access to science

At UCL, Professor Uchegbu uses nanoparticles to improve how medicines are delivered, and has taken her research towards real-world therapies through Nanomerics. Having overcome barriers in education and finance herself, she champions representation and inclusion in science.

> **Lesson for us:** Open the door behind you for the next generation.

Source: Royal Society Fellow profile

IU

Nano
Nanoparticles that deliver medicines more effectively

OO

COVID-19
Led major vaccine and treatment trials

INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Professor Onyema Ogbuagu

Professor of Medicine (Infectious Diseases) and of Pharmacology, Yale School of Medicine

Advancing infectious-disease research, vaccines and global capacity

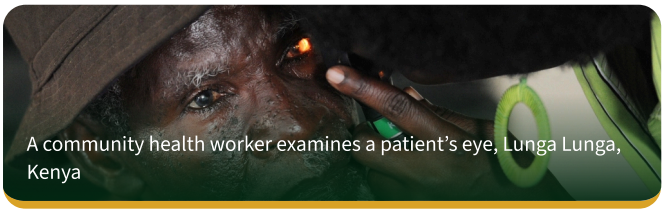
Professor Ogbuagu directs the Yale Antivirals and Vaccines Research Program, spanning HIV trials, antiviral development and research capacity-building in resource-limited settings. During the pandemic, he led major vaccine and treatment studies while helping the public understand fast-changing evidence.

> **Lesson for us:** Lead across care, research and teaching, and mentor as you go.

Source: Yale School of Medicine profile

Community health in action

Community health workers bring care to where people live, the approach Professor Amazigo championed.



A community health worker examines a patient's eye, Lunga Lunga, Kenya



Community health worker Venuste tests a resident for malaria, Rwanda

Photos: U.S. Air Force / Tech. Sgt. Daniel St. Pierre; Rogers Kigenza, GHSC-PSM. Public domain; use does not imply endorsement.

WHO WE ARE

A young network with deep roots

The Igbo Healthcare Professionals Network (UK) connects healthcare professionals of Igbo heritage across the UK. We support professional growth, strengthen representation and collaboration, develop future leaders, promote research and knowledge exchange, and build healthcare partnerships between the United Kingdom and Nigeria.

28 Aug 2026
The day IHPN-UK was founded

Issue 1
You are reading our very first newsletter

Every stage
From newly qualified nurses to long-serving professionals and a professor

Our professions

- Doctors, including general practice
- Adult nursing
- Mental health nursing
- Midwifery
- Health visiting (SCPHN)
- Non-medical prescribing
- Public health
- Immunisation
- Psychology
- Healthcare support work
- Enhanced care management
- Pharmacy
- Optometry

Our sector in numbers

Many of us are part of these figures. Behind every number is a colleague who has crossed borders, retrained or started again to care for patients in the UK.

1,614
nurses, midwives and nursing associates educated in Nigeria joined the UK register in 2025–26: the second-largest international source.

Source: NMC, The NMC Register 2025–26, accessed 18 Oct 2026

1 in 4
people on the UK's NMC register were educated outside the UK: 212,109 professionals (24.4%) at 31 March 2026.

Source: NMC, The NMC Register 2025–26, accessed 18 Oct 2026

42%
of licensed doctors in the UK qualified abroad: 138,405 doctors.

Source: GMC, Workforce report 2025, accessed 18 Oct 2026

7.4%
of NHS staff in England are Black, compared with 4.4% of the working-age population (June 2022).

Source: GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures, accessed 18 Oct 2026

BE IN ISSUE 2

Tell us in a sentence or two what you do and what being part of IHPN-UK means to you. We would love to share members' voices next time.

EMAIL IHPNUK@OUTLOOK.COM • WE ONLY PUBLISH WITH YOUR PERMISSION

From celebration to action

What these stories teach us

- Ask the questions others overlook.
- Build institutions, not just individual careers.
- Translate research into better care and stronger communities.
- Mentor deliberately: leadership grows through succession.

A call to the next generation

The next consultant. The next professor. The next matron. The next medical director. The next healthcare innovator. They may already be among us.

IHPN-UK is committed to helping that next generation find connection, encouragement and opportunity.

YOUR NEXT STEP



Mental health talk: register your interest

Now confirmed: Sunday 22 November 2026. Email us to register your interest and we will send you the time and joining details first.

Image: AI-generated illustration

Become a mentor or mentee

Mentoring is planned. Choose a mentoring option when you **apply online**, and we will contact you if and when it launches.

Nominate a colleague

Know an Igbo healthcare professional we should celebrate? Email **ihpnuk@outlook.com**.

Join the network

Join a growing network of healthcare professionals committed to connection, leadership, collaboration and service.

Apply to join online

Or message **@ihpnuk on TikTok**, or **join by email**

Connect with IHPN-UK

TikTok: @ihpnuk

Website: ihpnuk.github.io

Email: ihpnuk@outlook.com

WhatsApp: IHPN Community (members)

References & further reading

- Omalu BI et al. Chronic traumatic encephalopathy in a National Football League player. Neurosurgery. 2005;57(1):128–134.
- Eze JC, Ezemba N. Open-heart surgery in Nigeria: indications and challenges. Tex Heart Inst J. 2007;34(1):8–10.
- WHO/TDR: Uche Amazigo
- PMC: Uche Amazigo, neglected tropical diseases in the pandemic
- Royal Society: Professor Dame Ijeoma Uchegbu
- Yale School of Medicine: Onyema Ogbuagu profile
- NMC. The NMC Register, 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026. Accessed 18 October 2026.
- GMC. The state of medical education and practice in the UK: workforce report 2025. Accessed 18 October 2026.
- GOV.UK. Ethnicity facts and figures: NHS workforce. Accessed 18 October 2026.
- Illustrations are AI-generated and do not depict real people.