**Transcript of RPS Pharma Scene podcast #24**

**Ciara Duffy, RPS Pharmacy Board Member, and Aman Doll, RPS Head of Professional Belonging interview Taiwo Owatemi, Pharmacist and Labour MP for Coventry North West.**

*Welcome to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Pharma Scene podcast, our regular look at the world of pharmacy with guests from every sector and speciality. If you're a pharmacist, membership of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society will support your career, build your skills and represent your interests, visit www.rpharms.com/rps-membership to find out more. And now on with our Pharma Scene podcast.*

CIARA DUFFY 0:37

Hello, and welcome to the RPS Pharma Scene Podcast. I'm Ciara Duffy and a member of the RPS pharmacy board. I'm a pharmacist working in industry as a qualified person.

AMAN DOLL 0:49

My name is Aman and I'm the Head of Professional Belonging here at the RPS and I look after the inclusion and diversity strategy and putting it into practice and I also work as a hospital pharmacist at Queen's Medical Centre as a medical admissions specialist as well. Thank you for having me, Ciara as well as Taiwo.

CIARA DUFFY 1:07

We're joined today by Taiwo Owatemi, graduating from pharmacy at the University of Kent, Taiwo held roles in community pharmacy and as a senior oncology pharmacist in Dartford Valley Hospital before becoming one of the youngest members of parliament, serving as opposition whip Labour MP for Coventry Northwest since 2019. And since 2020, a member of the cross party Health and Social Care Committee. Taiwo is also a member of the petitions committee, and last year was elected Chair of the parliamentary all party pharmacy group and recently hosted the RPS reception held at the House of Commons celebrating women in pharmacy. Welcome to the RPS Pharma Scene podcast. Taiwo, we are absolutely delighted to have you with us today.

TAIWO OWATEMI 1:57

Thank you so much for having me. And I am absolutely honoured to be part of the podcast today. So thank you.

CIARA DUFFY 2:03

So the burning question what initially made you want to study pharmacy?

TAIWO OWATEMI 2:09

To be honest, I actually thought I was going to be a scientist in the lab. I love chemistry, and I love maths. One of my maths teachers actually was a pharmacist. So he persuaded me that pharmacy would be the right course because it allowed me to have interaction with patients, but also to be able to be in a lab and to be involved in drug discovery, and research and development. And it was that that really motivated me to pursue a career in pharmacy. And to be honest, throughout my studies at university, I was adamant that I was probably going to end up working in a lab, actually. But my career has taken a completely different journey since then.

CIARA DUFFY 2:46

Great. So you started your career as a pharmacist? And went onto oncology pharmacy which you were working in prior to your election to Parliament in 2019? What was it that prompted you to stand for election and become an MP?

TAIWO OWATEMI 3:03

Many reasons, actually, but I'd say the number one reason has to be the fact that it's just social inequality that exists. As a pharmacist, we often see, and are often aware of the fact that actually a postcode lottery does happen when it comes to health and patient access to health. And it's very difficult knowing that usually when patients write emails as to why they don't have access to that medication that their family members have in another area. All the pressure and all the blame is predominantly put on us when we are really trying to adhere to the formulary, and adhere to the processes that the hospital has. And for me, I felt personally that that was unfair. And I also believe that actually, you know, regardless of where you live, given the fact that we all pay our taxes, and we should all have access to health care within the right standards and having worked in different hospitals and in different settings, it became clear to me that actually that's not the case. And some areas have better funding and better access to health care than other areas. I would say that was the main driving factor for me to get involved in health care policy. But I really did start, again, as an interest more in policy than actually to be a politician. I was more interested in understanding how the policies are made and how they were implemented. But more than I got involved in healthcare policy, the more that I realised that actually sometimes the issue isn't the policy, it's the way that it's interpreted in each area, and it's the way the policy is scrutinised. And for me, that's what MPs do in terms of being involved in policy creation, but also scrutinising its implementation. And that's what ultimately led me to decide that I wanted to pursue a career in politics.

CIARA DUFFY 4:33

So how did you make that leap? How did you start from that interest in policy to stand in for election?

TAIWO OWATEMI 4:41

I wouldn't say it was like a normal route. I'm part of the Labour Party, and we have something called a Fabian Society. And it's essentially meant for people who are interested in policy and being active in the Fabian Society, I never really actually I'm going to be honest, went to any of my labour party meetings to begin with. I was always like, well, I'm only here for the policy. And then what One of my colleagues actually said to me, why don't you just go into a meeting and just get to see how a normal Labour Party, in your area functions. And when I went to that meeting, it provided me an insight into what was happening locally and what the key issues were. And it also made me realise that although I was focused on the bigger picture of trying to help with health policy, there were also key issues happening in my local area that I really need to be involved with and active with. And so that was, what got me more active in a local level. And then to be honest, I just got involved in a lot of community stuff. So I then became a school governor, I then started being involved in more local and community action and activities. And then during 2019, when the candidates elections were happening, actually one of my colleagues said to me, you should really consider it. And I was like, oh, I don't really know. And they said no, just consider it. And to be honest, I sent my application, maybe like a minute or two before the deadline. So I was like I'm not too sure, but I just thought, okay, you know what, let's do this. And the way the Labour Party works is, once you've done your application, you get interviewed, they ask questions about, you know, why do you want to stand in an area? What impact do you want to make? And what is your vision? And those questions really made me think deeply about the impact that I want to make. But also, it helped me even now as an MP, helps me stay focused in always monitoring the progress I'm making as far as an impact.

CIARA DUFFY 6:18

So has your impact statement changed since you have been an MP? Or does that remain your key focus?

TAIWO OWATEMI 6:26

It remains my key focus. But I'm going to be honest and say that sometimes it's so easy, because there's so much going on in Parliament, it is so easy sometimes to get involved with so many campaigns, so many activities. So it's quite important every couple of months that I just sit down and review. And I go back to the commitments I've made in the beginning to make sure what my progress is. So yeah, they still remain my key focus.

CIARA DUFFY 6:48

Yea it's very easy I'm sure when things are coming out if your yes person because you can't do everything.

TAIWO OWATEMI 6:54

No, you can't.

CIARA DUFFY 6:57

What lessons have you learned from either working in pharmacy and from your undergraduate degree that have been useful in your career as an MP?

TAIWO OWATEMI 7:06

The one that everyone says to me that I never realised was such a huge skill until I became a parliamentarian, was empathy. And to be honest, I don't even think I recognise obviously, as a healthcare professional, we have a lot of empathy and care for our patients that we speak to. But in the beginning, a lot of my colleagues used to say you listen to people, and I'm like, well, don't we all listen to people but they're like no you actually actively listen and have a conversation. So I would say that it is a skill that we don't really talk about, but it's definitely one that's useful in a career as a politician, being able to relate to people or being able to have a conversation where people feel open and that they are not judged, and that their ideas really do matter. I would say that's one of the most useful skills. But apart from that, I guess as a pharmacist, we're also actually taught how to scrutinise. Again, it's one of those skills that you don't really actively think about it until you're there. But when I see legislation, I remember in the beginning, I thought, I'm not a lawyer, why in the world are they making me do this line by line. But actually, as I sat down to read each legislation, I realised that I had the skills to ask the right questions and to think about things in a different way that most people don't think about it as well. And that, again, is a skill that we learned from the pharmacy course. Organisation, gosh there's so much that you don't realise is transferable. Organisation is key, how to run an office. So you know, each parliamentary office is essentially its own independent business, you recruit your staff, you do everything in taxes. And these are skills that a lot of people who don't come from a background where they used to do it, that are learning those skills, tend to find it difficult in the beginning to just settle in. And that was actually the right thing to do. And again, a pharmacy professional actually equips you with that, especially if you're community pharmacy, you already know how to interview people, you would know how to run your own small businesses and how to manage people effectively. But even in hospital we get taught that as well. So that has been very helpful. Yeah, and I guess being the leader as well, I think one of the things that when I was called and I was asked to be a whip, one of the reasons I was told was that it's because they realised that I'm able to speak to anyone, again, that was a skill, and I was able to work across different parties and different groups to achieve a general consensus. And that was a skill that I know that I learned from the pharmacy profession, because we're always working with multidisciplinary teams and having different conversations with different stakeholders to achieve their general aim for our patients. So yeah, there's a lot of skills you can definitely bring from the pharmacy sector into politics.

CIARA DUFFY 7:06

Great, lots of transferable skills. No doubt the scrutiny is good for the health and social care committee where you're scrutinising the work of the Department of Health and Social Care. So it must be great to add a different dimension of value in those types of conversations, who have you been inspired by in pharmacy and in your career to do it?

TAIWO OWATEMI 9:43

I would say that I've been inspired by a lot of people throughout the journey of my career. It's more to do with the words of wisdom and the things that they've been able to achieve. And I think that probably relates to more of their mentoring and coaching. So I would say for me one of my biggest inspirations as a pharmacist, actually, he was initially my tutor at University Dr. Uri Uscarial, he is an incredible, incredible lecturer. And he really took the time, which I thought was really weird, to speak to everyone in his tutor group and to sit down and know as well and know what our ambition is, and really help us navigate it. And that's very odd because although when you're at university, you always get told, Oh, you're, you know, you're on your own, and lecturers are just there to really make sure you're okay. I really felt when I was in the classroom, it felt like a tutor group at school. And it was his understanding of our strengths and weaknesses. And from my own perspective, his understanding of my strengths and weaknesses that kind of inspired me through the different career choices that I ended up making. And if I ever needed advice, he was always there to provide me with that advice and that guidance, and it kind of opened up my mind to the fact that anything was possible, and everything is possible. And I think I definitely feel very lucky to be have been able to have such a tutor like that. Yes, I'll say that he's probably my biggest inspiration, because nothing was ever impossible for him.

CIARA DUFFY 11:03

He sounds remarkable. So aside from that, have you had any particular mentoring and coaching? At the RPS we strongly believe in how important mentoring and coaching is. So did you have a particular mentor, or have you been a mentor to others?

TAIWO OWATEMI 11:19

I have to admit that I have been lucky in my life to have had many mentors throughout my education system and throughout my career system. And these are people who have provided me with guidance into the different career pathways I should use. And, you know, I've had a mentor when I was at secondary school whp provide me with the guidance to go off to university and the university I should go to. I had a mentor throughout university who helped me with how to navigate and then my holiday internships and just the different career pathways that existed in pharmacy and post graduation. I had a mentor who helped me gain an insight into the different areas of pharmacy for me to eventually decide which one I wanted to stay in and specialise in. And I've also been a mentor to other people, because I recognised that actually, you know, if I had that information, I should be able to share it and provide an insight. And having that insight is always one that really makes a difference, especially when you're not used to navigating the system. And for me, personally, I believe that mentors help to make that difference in providing that guidance, but also helping people to understand themselves better, to know their strengths and their weaknesses. And then, you know, providing a safe environment for them to really explore and achieve their full potential. And so, for me, I think mentoring is key in one's personal and professional careers.

AMAN DOLL 12:32

Brilliant. It's been amazing listening to how you transition from pharmacist to MP and all the transferable skills that you talk about and the importance of mentoring. So I suppose as a black female politician, have you faced any particular challenges in your career? And how have you approached these?

TAIWO OWATEMI 12:50

Yeah, being a black female politician has been difficult. And there are many challenges that you face either to do with your race or to do with your gender. And it's very difficult because the workplace legislations that exist in other areas of the country don't really work in Parliament. And I think the most important thing is just finding allies, who are able to help you and provide you with support. But secondly, actually being able to speak to people from different backgrounds and get to understand their perspective, because sometimes the fact that they're misinformed just comes from the fact that they've never actually been in those situations, or they're not used to the same levels of diversity as you're used to. So it takes a lot of patience and being understanding. But it can be more difficult being a black female politician. I guess there's a long way to go and for Parliament to be inclusive.

AMAN DOLL 13:33

I suppose when you contrast it to pharmacy, and parliament it's such a different demographic. So you've gone from quite a diverse demographic in pharmacy to probably less diverse, which must have been a bit of a shock in itself when you enter rooms, and you become more acutely aware of it. Yeah, oh, definitely.

TAIWO OWATEMI 13:49

You enter into a room and you're like, oh, I'm definitely the youngest person. Yeah, I am definitely a minority in this room. That in itself is still something that I'm adjusting to. But weirdly enough, age sometimes is a factor, but predominantly with many people it isn't. You know, for them it's just about asking you questions about your background and your experience. And as soon as people recognise that you've got something to give then people are very respectful.

AMAN DOLL 14:12

Yeah, like you said, it goes back to that educational place about not being exposed to it and then seeing it for the first time. So as far as, you've kind of touched on it a little bit, but what's your experience of inclusion and diversity being in Parliament? And are we heading in the right direction for a more equal and inclusive government from your perspective?

TAIWO OWATEMI 14:30

I would say that we're actively trying to go in the right direction. And I think it's actually two different things because an inclusive and diverse parliament is actually completely different from an inclusive and diverse government legislation. And it goes back to the fact that actually in Parliament, a lot of the legislations that we have done really don't apply, there's always loopholes as to why they don't apply in Parliament. And I think that from a government perspective, there's been a lot of effort in terms of ensuring that there's diversity and inclusion and although there's been changes every year, basically whoever's in charge on the amount of funding and support for that direction is given. But at least within society, we have recognised that we need to be more diverse, and we need to be more inclusive. I think that also comes with just society taking responsibility, and us individually trying to educate ourselves as well. No one is perfect, and no one is completely informed. But it's about always thinking about actually, you know, how do I treat those around me with the same respect, I expect people to treat me and I think that's something that we also need to promote in our workplaces. And amongst those around us, there's definitely a lot that we can do better in terms of equality and inclusiveness, we have a long way to go. But there's generally an understanding that will need to move in that direction, which I think is positive, which is something that we didn't have before.

AMAN DOLL 15:44

Yeah, that's positive, and really good to hear. And I suppose, unfortunately, there's been some media attention on how much resource the NHS spends in looking at inclusion and diversity, and you know the headlines of woke policies and everything that goes with that. And do you think there's still a need to keep championing this, even though there's this bit of a negative rhetoric that's surrounding at the moment?

TAIWO OWATEMI 16:06

Absolutely. The NHS, it's so diverse, and it's been diverse for a long time. And it needs to be a workplace where everybody feels listened, and everybody has opportunity to be able to develop and move up. And, you know, we've all got different examples of areas where sometimes you can look at how that decision has been made. And wonder actually was the lack of inclusion and diversity, the reason why certain decisions are being made and how it's impacted the morale of the staff within that particular workforce. In order for an organisation to thrive, every member in the workforce must be valued and must feel recognised as well, like, they all have the opportunity to be able to achieve whatever they say they wish to achieve for the organisation. And the only way you're really going to be able to get to that is when people have the right investment, but also when they believe their voice can be heard. And they believe that they're also a key stakeholder within the organisation in which they're working. So I think inclusive, and diversity is about improving patient care. And it's about ensuring that everyone who works within the NHS, regardless of the roles and regardless of you know the levels of influence they have, do feel valued, and are given the support they need to be able to achieve their full potential bring up the skills that they need to help the NHS thrive. So I think that it is important because in order for you to work for the NHS, you have to go above and beyond, you don't work your nine to five hours, we all work, everybody works extra hours to be able to help the hospital or institution run. And that comes from a goodwill and that comes from an absolute dedication to providing good patient care regardless of your role. And so if you're not happy in your role, if we don't feel supported, the sacrifices that you're willing to make will end up being limited. And we don't want that within the NHS because we recognise that a lot of it functions on people's dedication to providing good health care.

AMAN DOLL 17:49

Yeah, no, brilliant. It's about making the culture and the culture of belonging, so everyone feels part of something bigger.

INTERVAL

*If you're enjoying this episode of The Royal pharmaceutical society's Pharma Scene podcast, don't forget to tell your friends and colleagues about it. And remember, if you're a pharmacist, becoming a member of the royal pharmaceutical society will support your career, build your skills and represent your interests, visit www.rpharms.com/rps-membership to find out more.*

CIARA DUFFY 18:18

So what do you think are the big policy issues facing pharmacy? Both you know, where we are today? And looking into the future?

TAIWO OWATEMI 18:27

I would say the number one is probably the workforce challenge. And it's a very big one. It's a very difficult one because it's affecting all healthcare professionals, but also from a pharmacy perspectives it's the debate of do we have too many pharmacies? Or do we not have enough pharmacists? And, you know, is it about making sure that people are in different sectors? And again, that has been a very lively debate, but one in which actually, I think we need to start focusing on looking at the bigger long term workforce challenges that we have in terms of career progression, having leadership established within the pharmacy profession in terms of leadership in primary care and secondary care, where there's a clear pathway for pharmacists to be able to grow and to be able to input into the development of health policies. And we also have issues with access to medication, which again, it's an issue that doesn't really get spoken about, but fundamentally, you know, we've got the bypass scheme in which pharmaceutical companies have hesitation in being able to provide new medication to the United Kingdom and we also got complexes with our current contractual framework where pharmacies are not being paid adequately for the amount of money they spend on trying to get medicines to patients. And again, all of this is impacting patient care. And as a pharmacy profession, we have to start looking at the model and looking how best to make it work both for patients but also for the profession. I think fundamentally, pharmacy hasn't really changed in a while. And I think that given all the current challenges we have with a pharmacies shutting down, lack of workforce, there's a fundamental infrastructure that we need to look at as a profession, which is, I think, personally, first of all, does a future for pharmacy, look like one where we, for example, create a professional development pathway where pharmacists are able to work across all different sectors in a more flexible manner, which helps to compensate for some of the workforce challenges that we have. Does the pharmacy workforce, look at, you know, some of the supervision laws and try to make it more flexible, again, to allow to free up more capacity. There's a lot of debates that we need to have as a profession that I know that a lot of people have been talking about, even before I qualified, but I do think we are now getting to a point where we need to come to a consensus, because that's the only way the profession can develop. And we need to be able to decide what the future of pharmacy looks like and what that transformation involves. And we also need to come to a consensus and I think currently within the profession, it is recognised from others looking in and and I get many parliamentarians and Secretary of State saying to me that what makes the pharmacy profession so difficult is that there is no consensus. And because there is no consensus, how do you know what the next step is, and I think as a professional need to be able to come together and have those difficult conversations and agree on one clear pathway, which is something that I'm hopefully trying to work on. But I recognise that that in itself has its challenges.

AMAN DOLL 21:03

As you've described, there's so many different elements, and it's quite complicated. And health policy in itself is often seen as very complex as well. And as the chair of the pharmacy or party parliamentary group, is it sometimes a challenge to engage with busy MPs on such issues?

TAIWO OWATEMI 21:19

Yes because when people think about pharmacy, they predominantly think about the community pharmacy shop. And as long as that shop remains open, from their perspective, there's nothing wrong with pharmacy. And as long as the constituents are getting medication, then there is no issue within the sector. And it's about educating them about the different areas within the pharmacy profession, but also the key challenges that often we don't speak about as a profession. And that can be difficult because in order to fully engage MPs, you need to get the constituents to raise the issue. So that's the reason why in the APPG we try to encourage pharmacists to write to their MPs, because the more emails MPs get in, the more likely they're going to be aware that there is a problem. We also try different ways, so it's not just about the APPG meetings that we have now, we tend to target MPs. So if there's a particular campaign that we want MPs to be aware of, we look at MPs whose constituency might be particularly affected, we look at MPs who've spoken about those issues, and then you try to corner them off when they're doing votes, or when they're sitting down when they've got a minute just to quickly have that conversation with them to be having formal discussions as well. And then we also send bulletins and policy documents to them to have a read as well. So we've tried different ways to engage MPs. But fundamentally, the only way that we're going to get them to reprioritise pharmacy as an issue is by ensuring that they recognise that their constituents care about pharmacy as a profession. Yeah, and I think a good example of a profession who is great at doing this, by the way, are doctors. When there is an issue within GP services I have a lot of patients come to me about that particular GP and what the issue is. And I think as pharmacists, we need to be able to find a way to actively engage our patients to also do the same as well.

CIARA DUFFY 22:59

Politics is so important to pharmacy, from medicines pricing in the pharmaceutical industry, which you've already touched upon, to pharmacy first in the community. How can we encourage more pharmacists to engage in politics and influence health policy and the future of pharmacy?

TAIWO OWATEMI 23:16

First of all, I think it's just about encouraging people to join a political party, because usually I hear people ask me, how do you get involved in politics, and I've found and I've spoken to colleagues from other parties. As soon as you join, and you express your interest, there's actually a lot of support to help you and guide you through the whole system. And I know that, you know, everyone has got training opportunities within their political party to help people gain the skills and the confidence they need to be able to get involved in debates, and to give speeches. I also think as a profession, we have to be flexible. So for example, one of the special advisors that we currently have within the health team is a medical student, and that is part of their foundation year training. And you don't see that as part of our GPhC training, even though policy should be quite crucial to the development of the profession. So I think that we have to look at how we create a more inclusive training programme, to help ensure that pharmacists are actually interested in policy, because I think fundamentally, the reason why we're always missing out in policy discussions is because we're not on the table. Many pharmacists that I speak to don't even see it as a career option or career route to take. And there's absolutely no reason why that should be the case. And I think that's because it's not embedded in our education system. And it's not embedded as a key career pathway. And so I would say that those are the key things that we need to do to influence pharmacists into politics, but also ensure that pharmacy becomes a key policy moving into the future.

AMAN DOLL 23:16

It's a really interesting point you made about policy, actually, because I know when I worked at Health Education England, and I hadn't even thought about what policy was. I'd gone from a clinical pharmacists role and they were like, oh, you'd be doing policy. And I was like, what is that even, like, I don't even know what that means? But it was a bit of a steep learning curve, but it's so fundamental to everything we do, but we don't talk about it in the undergraduate degree.

TAIWO OWATEMI 24:54

Which is weird and I suppose for the GPhC you know, how do you get confident leaders for the profession if we don't talk about policy discussion? You didn't have the skills needed on the ground to start thinking about, you know how to create the right policies for the future of the profession. And I think fundamentally, that is what we're missing in the profession, even nurses to a certain extent, get given the necessary support needed to pursue policy they're interested in. Being in pharmacy, there isn't that clear career pathway, which is something that we need to create. And I would also say actually, like, I'm currently in the process of doing all my revalidation, which is not fun, it's never fun in a year. And you know, when I first got qualified, it was very difficult because I remember calling up the GPhC and saying, okay, I need to do my evidence, but this is how many hours I've worked and the advice was like, huh? And it actually got to a point where I remember saying to colleagues, I think I might not, I might not be able to practice or stay on the register, because I don't know a way around this and how to navigate around it. And it was through speaking to some of the pharmacy stakeholders, who wetre able to provide me with that guidance. But fundamentally, that should not be the case, it should be easy for somebody who enters into the policy base to know exactly what support is provided. When I spoke to my colleagues who are doctors, they were like, oh, yeah, we've got clear pathways for this. And I thought, actually, why don't we have that as a profession. So I do think we have to look inwards and see how we create the right support for pharmacists, so that they can move into the policy space and into areas where they're able to make positive influence for the profession.

AMAN DOLL 26:21

Yeah and the chief pharmaceutical officers fellowship is one way, but you're already quite established in your career by then, not from the beginning. So it's a really good point. Throughout what you've been saying, it's really given me some food for thought about how we can be better at I suppose embedding it in our undergraduate course upwards, but also thinking about how we do it in an inclusive way. So that it's not always the same people that tend to have those opportunities. But thinking about broadening it.

TAIWO OWATEMI 26:46

I know you get placements when you're school, but when you're university, you don't really get that insightful placement that you probably should have. And again, for me, what I would like to see from policy is opening that up and being a balancing profession. And it's something I've proposed. You don't really see that many pharmacists enter into the MHRA and having an insight into it. But you see other students doing that. And it's like, well, why don't you have the profession then? It has a lot to do in terms of really improving the current curriculum that exists to provide opportunities for students.

AMAN DOLL 27:13

So what would you recommend to listeners who have been inspired by your parliamentary career, and are currently working in pharmacy and are probably interested in moving into politics? What would you recommend that they do? Any advice that you've got for them.

TAIWO OWATEMI 27:27

Get involved in your political party, I'll definitely say that every political party right now would love to have a pharmacist. I know that the tories love it, there always like oh, we're gonna get one of ours. And then I'm like I hope, I look forward to seeing one of yours. So definitely, please just please join a political party. And just, you know, you have a lot of expertise to give and you have a lot of knowledge and it'd be great not to be the only person, so I would love to see more pharmacist in politics, there's the right support there. Every organisation has training schemes that will literally take you through the system. In the Labour Party, we've got the Jo Cox scheme, we've got a lot of training programmes that are available for everybody to get involved in. So please do have a look for them and just consider them and there's nothing wrong with just going in and trying and you know, you could start from the policy angle of the political party before you even get involved in politics if that's what you wish. So there are different ways to get involved in politics without necessarily being a representative if you're not interested in standing in for political role as well.

CIARA DUFFY 28:22

So outside of work and outside of Parliament and pharmacy, how do you like to relax? What do you do with your time off?

TAIWO OWATEMI 28:29

I like food, I genuinely really like food so I do love to eat and love to go out to eat always brings a smile to my face. I also like just going out, I'm an outdoor person so I love just you know if it's going to a musical concert. I just need to be out there trying out new adventures. Yeah, so it's just always trying to find something new to do literally, I'm always like oh have I not done that before then I'm like okay, let me give myself a new challenge and try to see how I deal with it. To relax as an MP is predominantly eating and looking for new adventures on the days that I have off free.

CIARA DUFFY 29:04

Taiwo I mean, what a enthralling conversation. We've discussed how it started from your love of chemistry and maths, drug discovery R&D to study in pharmacy, to being in wards and identifying that there is a postcode lottery and driving that identification of social inequality that then gives you that interest in policy to drive change as an MP in Parliament. We discussed all the transferable skills of pharmacy, such as active listening, empathy, organisation and scrutiny which have really helped you in your parliamentary career. And how checking in with the impact that you want to make and checking in with your own vision every few months is really important to remain focused. We discussed the role of mentors and being a mentor how that is important to give words of wisdom And to ensure that people understand that everything and anything is possible. You give us a highlight of one of your tutors from university who had a great impact on your life. We've discussed the difficulties of being a black politician, the importance of allies, and how we have a unique role and opportunity to ensure that we are making active efforts to improve inclusion and diversity, and how we are positively moving in the right direction. We discussed how important it is that everyone feels valued and feels recognised and able to feel that they can achieve what they want to achieve, and that their voice can be heard. We discussed some of the workforce challenges in pharmacy, and how we should be reviewing the career progression and leadership and primary and secondary care to influence our health policies. We touched upon the past and the contractual framework difficulties and the impact on patient care, as well as the pharmacy profession at the moment, we discussed things around the fundamental infrastructure of pharmacy, and how it's important to be able to come together to have difficult conversations on how we can move forward. We've talked about how important it is for pharmacists to actively engage with patients, and gave some great advice for our listeners who want to become engaged in politics. So join a political party, express your interest, and this will give you the training skills and confidence. And you really touched upon a great point which you and Aman were discussing around how we should really ensure that we're embedding health policy in pharmacy education and training to ensure that we have a clear pathway for pharmacists moving forward into the policy space. It's been such a great conversation. Thanks so much for being with us today.

TAIWO OWATEMI 31:22

Thank you very much for having me, I've enjoyed our discussion it's been fun.

*Thanks for listening to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Pharma Scene podcast. If you've enjoyed this episode, why not tell your friends and colleagues about it. And remember, if you're a pharmacist, membership at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society will support your career, build your skills and represent your interests. www.rpharms.com/rps-membership to find out more. Look out for the next Pharma Scene episode on all good podcast sources. See you next time.*