

An Unconventional Journey into Digital and Health Technology: Inspiring Nurses and Midwives to look at the talent within Ronke Adejolu

A Nurse by background, I've had an unconventional but incredible journey, spanning work across the NHS, Private Healthcare, Management Consultancy, AHSN and the Telecommunication sector in the UK, USA, Europe and South-East Asia. I developed an interest in technology in the early-mid nineties, when we had the delivery of our first and only compaq computer on the ward. This piece of technology was incredibly exciting but also very limited in functionality. As nurses, we were expected to deliver high quality care to patients without the right tools, timely data and/or access to clinical information systems to share information across systems and healthcare professionals. The point is, this didn't work for us or the patients at that point. I wanted to find out more about how clinical information systems and solutions were designed and built, including the opportunity to work with 3rd party vendors to influence decisions at the very early stages of requirements gathering, workflow processes, user case mapping, system design, data integration points etc.

My unconventional journey into Digital and health technology was bittersweet, back in the days, there was no real career guidance or steer for Nurses who were interested in what we now refer to as the digital health as an alternative path or sign posting to like-minded people with similar interests, so I ended up making one of the biggest decisions in my career, moving completely out of the NHS into the Telecommunications sector to working in intelligent platforms, product development- management, optimization and automation and the rest as they say is history.

I laughed at myself at one point, finding myself sitting in the VP's office at Wells Fargo having made it to the final stages of a Service Delivery Consultant interview a few years back. Although I didn't get role in the end, the confidence I'd built over the years was knowing I could potentially cross over could and work across a few more sectors, "Fear has no place here".

With a clinical background, I have first-hand experience on the frustrations and challenges faced by frontline healthcare professionals with regards to clinical systems integration and interoperability. As a Digital Programme Lead at NHSX, to continue working in an advancing environment where we use digital technology to optimize access to health services; improve the patient and user experience and contribute to health system efficiency while getting the best outcomes for patients and influencing nursing practices. Being at the forefront of the design of innovative, usable, scalable, sustainable and transformative digital health technology and solutions is an exciting and incredible place to be.

There have been bumps along the way, but I have been fearless and unapologetic in my career journey, I have learnt so much, gained invaluable transferrable skills, experience, knowledge and diverse capabilities, including the credibility of overseeing, managing and the delivery of complex Digital, IT, Business Change, Transformation initiatives and programmes nationally and across regions.

There is still so much I would like to do; I am incredibly grateful to those who have opened doors for me to work across such a diverse landscape and influence where and when it matters most. I have met so many positive people along the way including several men like Yonah Roth (Director, Xchange Telecoms) who recognised I was NOT just a uniform and opened my first door, thank you to CTG - Computer Task Group, also other extraordinary men like John Brouder @JohnBrouder, Dr Sam Shah @healthyopinion, Eddie Olla @eddieolla, Iain O'Neil @iainoneil, who support the **Shuri network** and continue to inspire me every day. As I move forward in my career, I am excited to continue to grow as a person,

learn new things, inspire other people, but most importantly, be of service to others and open more doors.

Now let' really talk about the “**Shuri Network**” I met the amazing Shera Chok (Shuri Network co-founder) at a GP Federation event hosted at Stamford Bridge football club in 2019. There was an interactive team/table swap during one of the afternoon sessions and that's exactly how we met, got talking, I became a Shuri member shortly afterwards and met the fearless Sarah Amani (co-founder). I was honoured to speak at one the Shuri network events in October 2019 and most recently at the Digital Health summer school event in July 2020. I am extremely proud to be a member of a progressive network aimed at making sustainable and systemic changes.

What is there not to love about the Shuri Network?

- Everyone is welcome!!!! ✓
- The First and only network specifically for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME/BME) women in digital and health technology ✓
It brings together inspirational network of BME/BAME women in digital and health technology leadership. ✓
- Promotes inclusivity, diversity and a culture, actively encourages and supports BME/BAME women ✓
- Actively facilitates and promotes the development and progression of BME/BAME women into senior digital and health technology leadership positions ✓
- Champions and works closely with the NHS, organisations, policy national bodies and senior leadership teams on diverse representation across their workforce ✓

It's time to positively promote and increase BAME/BME Nurse, Midwives, Nursing associate's involvement and representation across Clinical informatics, Clinical information systems design, Artificial Intelligence, Robotic process automation, Machine Learning, and Digital health programmes including their progression into senior digital nurse leaderships roles.

It is important we come together as women to keep inspiring current and future generations of the limitless possibilities so in years to come, we can stand tall as members of the **Shuri network** and proud to be part of the movement that helped break down the barriers by advocating for the inclusion of a diverse digital and health technology workforce for the future.

Always remember, Innovation no matter how big or small always starts with the question “**What problem are we trying to solve here?**” As Nurses, Midwives and Healthcare professionals on the front line, you are a unique position and best placed not only to identify problems but also to provide solutions.

The **Shuri Network** is a great vehicle that helps and provides an opportunity for us to reach out and broaden our horizons.