



## History and Students' School life in Orotta School of Medicine & Dentistry

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It was our long dream came to reality opening of a Medical School in country our. Although a Medical School was opened by the Italian colonization in 1941 and closed after two decades, **it served only their citizens**. Quite amusing only six Eritreans have got a chance to join. Orotta School of medicine was established officially on 16 February, 2004. The namesake Orotta was chosen for the school, because Orotta the base hospital that sheltered and nurtured all that were injured or taken ill in the pre-independence years, symbolized the dedication and sacrifices made by our martyrs and the countless hours spent by a dedicated core of medical personnel to ensure that best possible care was given to those who needed it most and hence it was felt an appropriate name to identify a worthy school with (Michael MOH). Those who fulfilled the criteria rushed to apply and after taking a couple of oral and written exams, the first 32 'the guinea pigs' yet the luckiest to be the first were chosen. The orientation was held in Debarwa, in the presence of the Task Force, Cuban professors, doctors, students and other guests. So much of sharing experiences, advice and expectations was there. The talks given by the doctors on 'what it takes to be a doctor' was quite fascinating and that made us nervous, excited and inspired. Then it was time to start class, books 'big humongous' brand new edition books were given. Dormitories, that were going to be our 'home' for the next 6 years were also given.

First year was quite a busy year, with basic sciences. Although most of us took some of the basic science courses in the University of Asmara yet it was worth repeating them because we were taught in a medically oriented approach here. We had to attend practical classes, seminars, and presentations which made us study more and busy. There were times were we had to stay late till 3 in the morning studying for exams or preparing for seminars. It was field of fighting with books and handouts to cover each and every subject.

Second year was not different from the first year in terms of the school activities, but with the arrival of new students the atmosphere changed and we got a chance to call the second batch 'freshmen'!!... No!! The coming of the second batch was like adding

new members to the family. And that made us feel like seniors who have a responsibility to take care and guide the new ones. Another important and funny concept we observed was, our families and friends expected us to know every disease and its treatment in such a short time. We believe this is a very important message to all of us because it tells how much our family and our people are expecting from us.

Third year was a completely different year because we started our clinical attachment, which meant 'patients are our books. We started to handle the three star navigator, stethoscope "physicians' emblem". We tried to understand and interpret the miraculous sight and constellation of stethoscope by navigating the body of patients. It felt great to round and learn from the senior Eritrean doctors, it also gave us a sense of closeness. But also it was a scary rotation because for some of us it was the first time to see and touch different kind of patients and the worst of all dying and dead patients. As we attend surgery for the first time and see the abdomen opened, a couple of students got fainted.

Regarding entertainment activities, we had occasional parties organized by the students and the school. Occasions like celebrating our school's opening anniversary, New Year, 24<sup>th</sup> May, and farewell parties of our Cuban professors. These parties aimed at creating unity and love between the students of all batches. This is sometimes a golden opportunity for some guys to stare at some ladies of their school mates because; this day is a relative relief and realizes the social life.

Clinical years didn't get any easier, but a lot more interesting. You go to the pediatrics and see sick children, and that makes you want to be a pediatrician and help all the children. Then you go to OBGYN and you see the miracles of saving a laboring or a bleeding mother from her agony and that overwhelms you. Then you go to surgery and you see all the organs in our body wide open and how each doctor fixes the busted part very carefully and artistically and you simply admire them. At the end of the day we all realized that each field of medicine is important and interesting in its own way.

Four years later Orotta School of Medicine has also opened Dentistry and the number of batches has been reached seven in Medicine and three in Dental. Quite a blessing!! The cycle is the same for every batch once you joined to the school, have been received an orientation session, day after that your books would be given, classes start with seminars and practical session. The doses increase with time, as join clinical area "Harrison" comes then follows "Nelson" and "Love and Belly" father of internal medicine, pediatric and surgery respectively. After finishing two years of basic science and three years of clinical rotation new life came "internship". It is real time to practice medicine, acquire skill, hand experience, and started to reek a physician. It is hectic but enthralling. During internship no one is kind to himself and every one considers you as inexhaustible resource even there are times you could stay 60 hours if time allows. It is time to be tested like a good metal in a red oven. Finally internship creates power lets you to appreciate how much medicine is Nobel, quite fascinating field ever changing science and art.