



Figures. Dr. Okeke and her family (1). Dr. Okeke's son playing basketball (2). Dr. Okeke (bottom left) with her high school cheering team (3). Dr. Okeke's new book, *The Glaucoma Guidebook: Expert Advice on Maintaining Healthy Vision* (4).

A PUBLISHED AUTHOR



A bit about my family life, passions outside of eye care, and creative pursuits in ophthalmology.

BY CONSTANCE OKEKE, MD, MSCE

FAMILY LIFE

I met my husband, Richard, in Philadelphia, where he worked as a designer for Boeing Integrated Defense Systems as an aerospace engineer. With a designer's eye for detail, his passions expanded into real estate, where he is now an investor. My husband is my biggest supporter, wisest advisor, and most amazing companion. With God as our center, we have been happily married for 16 years and have lived in Hampton Roads, Virginia, for about 13 years. Together we have three wonderful children, Izu (15), Ify (14), and Obi (10), who keep us on our toes and motivate us to do our best (Figure 1).

The whole family loves movies, so it's typically Cinema Okeke on Friday nights at our house. We also

enjoy traveling on road trips and internationally. My husband and I are fans of live comedy—we are frequent visitors to The Funny Bone, which is a comedy club in Virginia Beach. We also enjoy dancing, taking long walks, riding our bikes, and spending time with friends and family.

It is a joy to watch our kids' interests develop and to offer encouragement along the way. I love seeing their creativity come to life. Our older daughter is an avid reader with such a vivid imagination and a gift for writing short stories. Our younger daughter is in the arts as singer in the school Honor Choir, but she also has an entrepreneurial spirit. Along with her sister, she is developing a greeting card business, and we are all excited to see where it goes. Our son plays high school

basketball, and we enjoy watching his games (Figure 2). It is exciting to see his skills improve and hear the crowd chant his name when he scores.

PERSONAL PURSUITS

The arts. I was a cheerleader for 4 years in high school and a captain my senior year (Figure 3). That experience, and being a soprano in the high school choir, taught me how to project my voice and find my passions for singing and dance. In college at Yale, I was in a jazz and modern dance group called Rhythmic Blue and a member of the Yale Gospel Choir for all 4 years. I am still spiritually moved and inspired when I sing songs from the gospel choir. I continued to pursue activities that allowed me to incorporate choreography and singing into my

years at Yale Medical School and Johns Hopkins/Wilmer Eye Institute. I do not perform now, but I still love to sing in the shower.

YouTube and writing. My passion for ophthalmology is so strong that I feel it's my calling. I never tire of education on eye care—especially for patients with glaucoma. I enjoy seeing patients and performing surgery, but I cherish the creative projects that ophthalmology allows me to pursue. I create videos for my YouTube channel, iGlaucoma, and work with industry in various capacities. I'm also in the process of creating educational courses, including online offerings to reach a broader audience. One other area I have often been asked to pursue is to put together a master course on the process of writing a book because I have now written two.

My first book was *The Building Blocks of Trabectome Surgery, Volume 1: Patient Selection*,¹ which was published in 2017. As an early MIGS adopter, I had a relentless desire to share the importance of adopting MIGS with the masses because it was providing such excellent outcomes for my patients. This book is a primer for the early MIGS surgeon; it provides the steps to getting started with all MIGS procedures.

My second book, *The Glaucoma Guidebook: Expert Advice on Maintaining Healthy Vision*, is for patients,² and it was released on January 3. (Figure 4). It started as a top 10 list for glaucoma awareness month. I thought it could be genuinely useful to patients, and with my husband's encouragement, I continued to flesh it out. Eventually, the top 10 list turned into something more substantial. The success of glaucoma care depends on patients' taking ownership of their condition and knowing why and how to care for their eyes. For patients, it's an easy-to-read pathway to enlightenment, empowerment, and self-advocacy. For eye care providers, it's a pathway to better doctor-patient relationships and

enhanced communication. My hope is that patients who read the book will feel well advised and motivated to act to protect their vision and live their lives to the fullest.

Writing a book for patients allows me to serve not just the individuals in my clinic but also people around the world, thanks to the reach of the Johns Hopkins University Press. A portion of the book's proceeds will support eye care organizations that I believe in, such as the Glaucoma Research Foundation, for which I am an ambassador, and the American Glaucoma Society Foundation, of which I am a member.

DO WHAT YOU LOVE

I'm grateful for my family and friends with whom I love to spend time. I also feel honored that ophthalmology allows me such a wonderful variety of ways to express myself. Whether working on personal projects, sharing knowledge by writing books, or running educational courses, I feel blessed that my efforts in ophthalmology do not actually feel like work.

Writing a book for patients makes me feel like the kind of role model my father encouraged me to be. His number one message was to be kind, and this book is my effort to be kind to the world. ■

1. Okeke CO. *The Building Blocks of Trabectome Surgery, Volume 1: Patient Selection*. Kugler Publications; 2017.

2. Okeke CO. *The Glaucoma Guidebook: Expert Advice on Maintaining Healthy Vision*. Johns Hopkins University Press; 2023.

CONSTANCE O. OKEKE, MD, MSCE

- Assistant Professor of Ophthalmology, Eastern Virginia Medical School, Norfolk
- Glaucoma specialist and cataract surgeon, Virginia Eye Consultants
- Member, *Glaucoma Today** Editorial Advisory Board
- iglaucoma@gmail.com;
www.DrConstanceOkeke.com
- Financial disclosure: Author (*The Building Blocks of Trabectome Surgery, Volume 1: Patient Selection* and *The Glaucoma Guidebook: Expert Advice on Maintaining Healthy Vision*)