

WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT...

DR. ORIT ABDALLA

MEDICAL OFFICER



INTERVIEW BY DR ELLEN ABAKAH

AFRICAN WOMEN AUSTRALIA INC. (AWAU)

Dr. Orit Abdalla is an Australian born Ethiopian who was raised by hardworking parents that migrated to Australia as refugees in the early 1980's. She is currently a Hospital Medical Officer, and has recently been accepted into The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. She has a particular interest in women's health and aims to one day own a private practice with a focus on family planning and women's sexual and reproductive health.

WHEN INTRODUCED AT A PARTY, HOW DO YOU TYPICALLY DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

I'm initially reserved and quiet. So I would typically introduce myself with very few words, 'Hi, my name is Orit. What's your name?' However, once you have me talking, I'm quite inquisitive and love to learn about others.

WHAT DO YOU GET UP TO IN YOUR SPARE TIME?

COVID-19 has made me reflect on the things we can all achieve with a bit of spare time. In the past, I spent my spare time catching up with friends or watching Netflix series. However, this year, I have delved more into my creative side and I've found a passion for sewing. I find it therapeutic and satisfying. I'm also a youth leader... During my free time, I help run various programs to support and empower our youth to make a positive impact to the wider Australian community. I also love to travel and experience new cultures in my spare time.

WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO AND WHY?

My grandmother, Alawiya Abubaker Sherif. My grandmother went through many hardships in life. Through these hardships, she managed to start her own business and be financially independent which was rare as a female during her time in Ethiopia. She returned to school and learnt how to read and write in English at the age of 50. She had great patience, strength and resilience. She taught me to never give up and to have hope, because for with every hardship comes ease.



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WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE A KID?

A therapist. I liked the idea of listening to someone speak about their problems and then try to navigate a solution to their problems. I later learnt that being able to do this wasn't limited to therapists.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR TEENAGE SELF?

Be proud of who you are and where you came from. Appreciate what makes you unique and embrace your culture. No matter how many times you hear people comment on your hair; your hair is different' or 'it's hard' or 'it's not neat', just remember, just because your hair doesn't look like anyone else's hair in the classroom, it doesn't mean it's not beautiful. You are beautiful, your hair is beautiful!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE BLACK GIRLS AND WOMEN LIVING IN AUSTRALIA?

Work hard, always strive to be the best. Although you may find yourself working 10 times harder sometimes, you are noticed! So, when you do well, you will be noticed. Always try to be ahead of the game and seek advice from those more senior to you.

WHAT WAS YOUR MOST CHALLENGING CAREER SETBACK? HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

When I was in my final year of high school, I was told by my career advisor that I would never get into Medicine and to think of alternative careers. This was very disheartening as I work really hard and I didn't want to think of an alternative career. I entered university the following year as a Chiropractic student with the intention to achieve the perfect GPA to apply for Medicine the following year. I work extremely hard which resulted in achieving the perfect GPA. The day I received a phone call informing me that my Medical school application was successful, I heard the voice of my career advisor from high school. He was wrong, and I was right. Don't ever let someone tell you that you can't do something you want to do!

WHAT WILL YOUR NEXT BIG PURCHASE BE? WHY?

A house! I believe investing at a young age is important in order to achieve financial freedom. With the goal of being able to achieve financial independence, I will be able to use my time to help others and make a difference within the wider community and globally.

WHO HAS BEEN INFLUENTIAL IN HELPING YOU TO GET TO WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?

My parents! Without a doubt! If it wasn't for my parents, I would not have been where I am today. As refugees, my parents arrived in Australia in the early 1980's with a suitcase and minimal savings. They integrated into the Australian society and invested their time, efforts and finances into their children in hopes that we would be successful. Their efforts were well rewarded with a better life and three successful children.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACHIEVE IN THE NEXT DECADE?

In the next decade, I hope to complete my GP training, have a family, and own a private practice. I also hope to use the knowledge and skills I have acquired through giving back to disadvantaged communities across Africa, alongside other medical teams on the ground.

HOW CAN AFRICAN WOMEN LEARN MORE ABOUT YOU AND YOUR WORK?

Check out Dr Orit Abdalla on
Instagram: @oritaay
Email: orabdalla@gmail.com

African Women Australia Inc. (AWAU) is a women-led, community-based and non-profit organisation that aims to strengthen national intellectual capacity on African Women in Australia. We are doing so by being the hub for the most comprehensive, up-to-date and Afrocentric information about African women in Australia. We do this by employing an approach that incorporates African feminist, human rights centred and intersectional understandings to our work with African communities.

AWAU's Mission is to Raise the Voices and Profile of African Women in Australia. Visit our website:
www.awau.org.au

If you know an African woman living in Australia who we should celebrate please contact Dr Tinashe Dune and Dr Ellen Abakah: secretariat@awau.org.au