

"My role is a daily challenge and I love that because it makes every day interesting."

Meet Teniola to discover why she chose a career as an orthoptist.

Teniola Ibrahim

Orthoptist

Teniola's work experience in the eye department at her local hospital made her realise how dynamic an orthoptist's role is.



How did you get started?

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I always knew I wanted to work within a healthcare setting that involved treating children.

I researched possible healthcare careers and came across the role of an orthoptist. I discovered that it was a hospital-based role, treating both adults and children with eye movement disorders. It also combined my interest in the eyes and brain anatomy.

During my work experience, I shadowed an orthoptist in the eye department at my local hospital. I saw what a difference the orthoptist made to the patients' quality of life by treating double vision, improving a lazy eye and managing squints. I also experienced how dynamic the work was as each case was unique. That's when I decided to enrol in the orthoptics BSc undergraduate programme.

A day after my final exam, I was offered my first job as a qualified orthoptist.

What is your typical day like?

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In a typical day, I see patients with simple or complex needs, ranging in age from a few months old to 90 years old and beyond. These patients are referred to the eye clinic by an optician, health visitor or other specialities in the hospital.

We commonly see children with a lazy eye that we help treat with patching to improve their vision. We also see adults and children with squints that are treated by surgery or botulinum toxin injections by an eye surgeon.

Patients with double vision are frequently referred to orthoptists and it's my job to determine the cause of the double vision and to manage the condition with treatments such as prisms to join the double vision together.

I'm responsible for assessing the patients before and after these treatments and to make sure that the best outcome is achieved. As an orthoptist, I'm an autonomous practitioner and my role requires good decision making and management skills.

What's the best part of your role?

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The staff and patients make work a joy – especially the children. It's great to know you're making an impact on a child's future.

How about the challenges?

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My role is a daily challenge and I love that because it makes every day interesting.

What are your career plans?

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As an orthoptist, there are many avenues to specialise in such as special educational needs, low vision, stroke ^[1] or glaucoma.

In my current role, I work closely with the neuro-ophthalmologist in the eye department to diagnose and manage patients referred to the eye clinic with neurological conditions that can manifest into eye movement problems. These include conditions such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's or patients with brain tumours. Sometimes, we are the first people to identify these neurological conditions after assessing the patients' eye movements. This area greatly interests me and I hope to specialise in it one day.

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Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Stroke>