

Julius Asubonteng

- Please describe your **Background** before coming to the University of Pittsburgh – why did you choose Pitt?

My background is in computer science and mathematics, and I became interested in medical research when I interned for Pfizer Inc. in my junior year in college. I worked on number of projects that span over different therapeutic areas, as well as phases of clinical trials. After graduation, I went to work for a number of outfits that largely deal with clinical research. I learnt the importance of statistics in bringing medical research to the market. I later enrolled in graduate school to get a formal training in biostatistics. In the course of my training, I noticed the fine line between crunching the numbers and putting the appropriate meaning to it. With this thought, I decided to pursue a PhD in Epidemiology, which could afford me the necessary tools to properly pose right questions, design study, and offer accurate and sound interpretation to advance public health. I chose Pitt mainly based on its reputation in scholarship and research!

- **Areas of Interest and dissertation work** (OK to describe proposed work even if it is not finalized yet.)

My interest spans over subclinical cardiovascular disease (SCD). My dissertation will seek to assess the hormonal changes, lipids and the progression of SCD in midlife women. The incidence of cardiovascular disease is extremely high among women, and the greater burden of this occurs after menopause. This brings to fore, the importance of knowing the factors that explain why women are at greater risk of CVD after menopause. To add to this body of research, I plan to tap into the unique features of SWAN study to examine why women are disproportionately affected by CVD after menopausal transition.

- **Perspectives on the program** – What do you like about the program – what do you see as the advantages?

The program is customized to fit the interest of all. It is easily found that everyone is getting something meaningful in each of the workshop that is offered every semester. The strength of each trainee varies and that of itself is a plus to all. I have come to enjoy subclinical cardiovascular disease journal club meetings. It continues to offer me the opportunity to learn to give – presentations, which will come in handy as I develop my career path.

- **Advice to current and prospective students:** Speaking to either prospective students or students who are earlier in the program than you, what advice can you give them?

Be specific on area of cardiovascular disease you are interested in early on. Talk to people to help you pare down on the specifics, if you do need help. Seek to understand the subclinical measures that are performed at URL, if that happens to be something of interest to you. Open up to share ideas with other trainees and seek to collaborate with colleagues and faculty members.

- **Future Plans and opportunities:** What will you do after you graduate – how has Pitt opened opportunities for you?

I am not certain what the future holds for me; but given my background, I sense the sky is the limit in terms of the things I potentially could be doing. I enjoyed doing an outcome research in the pharmaceutical setting, and I'm sure outcome research in cardiovascular disease will definitely be of interest to me at some point.