

Quinn Akari Painter (neuroscientist and psychiatrist)



Quinn Akari Painter is currently an Adult Psychiatry resident at Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio. She is in her third year of residency. Quinn is a graduate of the Creighton University Medical School in Omaha, Nebraska. Before medical school she received her master's degree in Interdisciplinary Neurosciences at Goethe University of Frankfurt in Frankfurt, Germany and worked as a research assistant at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research.

Her science journey began when Quinn Akari Painter was born in Denver, Colorado in 1992. She is the only child of Gregg Painter, a retired schoolteacher and Paula Ison, a retired lawyer. Quinn went to middle school and high school at the Denver School of the Arts and studied Film Production. She then went to college at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California and initially majored in Film Production, then switched to Natural Sciences with a minor in Film Studies. In college, Quinn did not have any mentor that advised her to go to medical school. Her college somewhat lacked robust scientific mentorship. The pre-med students were in separate classes from the natural science students. She did not even consider medical school until she was shadowing a physician assistant, and the PA's supervising physician asked Quinn "Why don't you just apply to medical school? You're young!" Quinn had not considered medical school because she thought you must decide early on (perhaps right after high school) that

you would like to go to medical school. She didn't realize that in actuality, the majority of medical students don't go to medical school right after college.

As to the field of psychology/psychiatry, her earliest influence was her father Gregg who shares an interest in psychology and likes to discuss topics including psychology and neurology at home. Gregg's father was a prominent child psychiatrist in St. Louis, Missouri. Gregg's brother is a clinical psychologist in California. Quinn will be the third generation in the psychology/psychiatry field in the family.

Quinn was also influenced by the book "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat" by Dr. Oliver Sacks, a narrative collection of his patients when he worked as a neurologist.

Quinn became interested in the specific field of psychiatry during her master's studies, when she worked in the



Research Group of Translational Psychiatry at Goethe University of Frankfurt. It was there that she worked alongside a group of researchers studying genetics, neurobiology, neuroscience, and clinical psychiatry. She initially started her master's degree in pursuit of a PhD in Neuroscience in Germany, but she decided at the end of her master's program to return to the United States and apply for medical school. Her research in Behavioral Psychiatry was focused on the behavioral patterns of mice, and she did not actually work with any patients, but one of the head researchers was a clinical

psychiatrist. He allowed her to observe him in his daily work with patients. That's

when she realized she was not cut out for a career in bench research and is much more suited for a clinical career.

WORK AFTER COLLEGE

After college, she worked at restaurants and as a nanny while she figured out what to do next. It was difficult to get a science job with just a bachelor's degree. Her nanny jobs paid well and allowed her to study for the MCAT. Applying for medical school was quite hard! The schools not only expect the applicants to have excellent GPAs and MCAT scores but also research experience, volunteer hours, shadowing hours, work experience, and interesting extracurricular hobbies. Most people are not accepted in the first year they apply, and the expectations seem to get higher every year. Quinn went into significant credit card debt while applying for medical school, over \$5000 spent on applications, MCAT fees, and travel costs for interviews. She was barely able to pay off these credit card bills before starting



medical school. Unfortunately, by the nature of the requirements and costs, the schools tend to select higher income students who have ample financial resources, time, and connections. It is not an even playing field and Quinn considers herself lucky that she was able to get into medical school.

Quinn loves her current job! She is a 3rd year psychiatry resident. Everyday is different! It can be difficult sometimes not to take work home, especially when she is worried about a patient.

Quinn recently started a new position as Chief Resident where she focuses on the resident's

outpatient and clinic work. She helps residents tackle difficult outpatient problems. She assigns therapy patients, assists in scheduling, and organizes onboarding for the new interns. It's been a wonderful learning experience! Last year, she was the Snack Chief, which was a great honor (she got to choose the snacks for the resident's room).

In medical school, she received three awards at graduation. The first was Outstanding Student in Psychiatry, the second was Outstanding Service to the School of Medicine and the third was the Aesculapian Award for “*excellence in teaching, compassionate delivery of patient care, and consistent demonstration of integrity*”. This was the award she was most proud of, because it was voted by her fellow medical students.



At this time, she is interested in staying in academics and continuing to work with medical students and residents. She is interested in general psychiatry, women's mental health, and addiction psychiatry. She recently joined the Women's Behavioral Health specialty track of her program, and has started attending more specialized lectures including post-partum depression or psychosis, medications in breastfeeding, perimenopause, pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder, etc. Her program is paying for her to attend the National Curriculum in Reproductive Psychiatry Intensive Practicum this Spring which she is really looking forward to!

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

In the first two years of residency, Quinn was working anywhere from 40-80 hours every week, so for some weeks she simply could not balance work and home life! In those busy weeks, if she had three meals a day and clean clothes, she was doing well. Now that she is working 40 hours a week consistently, she is trying to prioritize



exercise and hobbies she enjoys, with learning and reading for her job. It's going well so far!

MENTORING WOMEN SCIENTISTS

Quinn does not have specific mentees, but she does her best to mentor medical students especially when they are interested in psychiatry. One of her favorite medical students she has worked with is now an intern in the same program as Quinn and she's doing well! In the future, she would love to have official mentees.

ADVICE FOR NEW GRADUATES

Quinn's advice to anyone who is interested in research is to apply to graduate programs outside of the United States. In Germany, the programs are funded by the government, and the instruction is 100% in English. There are other free English Master's programs in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, and more countries in Europe. There are probably similar programs outside of Europe, but she did not look into them. Quinn said that with graduate school abroad, one will have an amazing time working with international researchers, meeting new people, and travelling.

HOW CAN WE GET GIRLS INTERESTED IN SCIENCE?

Luckily, there are now more female researchers in science to serve as role models for young girls. Neuroscience in particular, which is a newer field, seems to have more female researchers as Principal Investigators (PIs) of labs. Quinn thinks that as younger female scientists grow into leadership positions, there will be a more equitable future. When she was young, she had the notion that science is overly serious and purely analytical, whereas in reality, science can be fun, creative, and imaginative.

HER SCIENCE JOURNEY

1992-Quinn Akari Painter was born in Denver, Colorado

2010-Finished high school at Denver School of the Arts

2014- Received her bachelor's degree in Natural Sciences at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, California

2014- Moved to Switzerland and worked as a Nanny

2016 -Started her master's degree at the Goethe University of Frankfurt in Frankfurt, Germany and worked as a research assistant at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research.

2018-Received her master's degree in neuroscience at the Goethe University of Frankfurt in Frankfurt, Germany

2020-Started Medical School at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska

2024- Received her Medical degree from Creighton University

2024 -Started residency in psychiatry at Cleveland Clinic in Cleveland, Ohio

2026 -Became Chief Resident in Psychiatry at Cleveland Clinic