Joanna Chikwe, MD, decided she wanted to be a cardiac surgeon when she was in junior high school. “I saw a documentary on the pioneering work of cardiac surgeon Sir Magdi Yacoub,” she says. “There was never any doubt in my mind that this was what I wanted to do.”

Today, Dr. Chikwe is Assistant Professor of Cardiothoracic Surgery and Associate Program Director of the residency program in the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery. She is also Mount Sinai’s first female cardiac surgeon.

“Dr. Chikwe is an outstanding surgeon and educator. I feel very fortunate to have her as a member of our faculty,” notes David H. Adams, MD, the Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Professor and Chairman of the Department of Cardiothoracic Surgery.

“It’s very rewarding working in a specialty where—almost every day—you help someone live longer and feel better,” says Dr. Chikwe, who joined Mount Sinai earlier this year.

Dr. Chikwe is the author of several surgical textbooks. She has published extensively on outcomes after cardiac surgery and speaks regularly at major international meetings.