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Serena Auñón-Chancellor

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Dr. Serena Auñón-Chancellor, NASA astronaut.

Modern Biography: Serena Auñón-Chancellor

By Lauren Fogg, Mechanical Engineering Junior

Serena Auñón-Chancellor is a NASA astronaut who has helped make contributions in biology, biotechnology, physical science, and earth science. She recently served as Flight Engineer on the International Space Station (ISS) where her crews performed investigations into new cancer treatment methods and algae growth in space. Her first stay aboard the ISS was 197 days long, and now she covers medical issues and on-orbit support in the Astronaut Office.

Serena was born on April 9, 1976, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Her parents are Margaret Auñón, who writes murder mysteries, and Dr. Jorge Auñón, who was the dean of engineering at the University of Alabama in Huntsville until he retired in 2005. Many children dream of becoming an astronaut. Such was the case of Serena, who knew she wanted to be an astronaut at the age of eight. After graduating from Poudre High School in Fort Collins, Colorado, in 1993, she went to study at George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where she received a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering in 1997. In 2001, she earned her Doctorate of Medicine from The University of Texas - Health Science Center at Houston. Serena completed her medical residency in internal medicine at The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston, Texas, in 2004. She then completed an additional year as Chief Resident in the Internal Medicine department at the same place. Serena is board certified in both internal and aerospace medicine.

In August 2006, Dr. Auñón-Chancellor was employed at Johnson Space Center as a flight surgeon under the UTMB/Wyle Bioastronautics contract. During this time, she spent more than nine months in Russia supporting medical operations for ISS crew members in Star City and doing water survival training in Ukraine. She also served as the Deputy Crew Surgeon for STS-127 and held the role of Deputy Lead for Orion - Medical Operations.

In July 2009, Dr. Auñón-Chancellor was selected as one of fourteen members of NASA Astronaut Group 20, the 20th NASA astronaut class, graduating in November from Astronaut Candidate Program. This training included scientific and technical briefings, intensive instruction in space station systems, spacewalks, robotics, physiological training, T-38 flight training, and water and wilderness survival training. She also spent two months from 2010 to 2011 as part of the Antarctic Search for Meteorites (ANSMET) expedition, spending most of her time living on the ice two hundred nautical miles from the South Pole. After her time in Antarctica, Dr. Auñón-Chancellor operated the DeepWorker submersible on NASA Extreme Environment Mission Operations (NEEMO) 16 in June 2012. While operating the submersible, she also served as an aquanaut aboard the Aquarius underwater laboratory during the NEEMO 20 undersea exploration mission. She finally got her chance to go into space on June 6, 2018. During her 197 days in space, she carried out numerous experiments that helped the scientific understanding of the world grow. Now, Dr. Auñón-Chancellor spends most of her time handling medical issues for both the ISS Operations branch and Commercial Crew Branch.

Dr. Serena Auñón-Chancellor has received many awards. In 2004, she was awarded the Thomas N. and Gleaves James Award for Excellent Performance by a Third-Year Resident in Internal Medicine (2004). In 2005, she was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Society. She has also received the William K. Douglas Award, Outstanding UTMB Resident Award, and the United States Air Force Flight Surgeons Julian Ward Award.

Dr. Serena Auñón-Chancellor stands out as a remarkable woman who contributes to the scientific community as both a surgeon and an astronaut.

Sources:

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