

MEMORIALS

Professor Adelola Adeloye (1935–2021): An icon in the annals of medicine

Adeloye-Odeku disease, a congenital disease of the brain, was first described by Adeloye A and Odeku EL in their landmark publication in 1971 [1]. They were Nigeria's second and first neurosurgeons, respectively. The existence and nomenclature of this disease, that is eponymous, is now established worldwide and has been fully engraved into the lexicon of the world's medical literature in perpetuity.

We celebrate the life of a great physician-surgeon, Adelola Adeloye, an Emeritus Professor of Neurosurgery at Nigeria's premier medical school, The College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, and retired Consultant Neurosurgeon, University College Hospital, Ibadan.

Adelola Adeloye was born in Ilesa in Western Nigeria on July 18, 1935 and passed on April 6, 2021. He was the first of five children born to Ebenezer Ajayi and Elizabeth Adeloye. His father, whom he personally described as a 'Village genius', originally hailed from Ikole-Ekiti, but worked in Ilesa as a mechanic. He invented a cassava grater, a double cassava grating machine, and a cotton wool spiner machine. Adelola attended primary school at St. Paul's CMS School in Ikole-Ekiti (1941–1946) and secondary at Christ's School, Ado-Ekiti (1947–1952). At Christ's School, he was the Government's academic scholar (1949–1952), the school prefect/president (1952), and the football/soccer captain (1952). He graduated in 1952 with distinction in the Cambridge School Leaving Certificate Examinations.

The young Adeloye was looking into a career in mechanical engineering until he met his father's friend. That friend told him that his father had done everything with machines. He should do something else. Adeloye, who had never heard of medicine at the time, asked, 'What else can I do?' The old man, who had just arrived from Ibadan where he saw white coated doctors at the hospital, told him medicine. Adeloye later moved to Ibadan, only to find out that he needed physics and chemistry, classes he never took before, to enter medicine. He had a word of encouragement that because of his performance in additional mathematics, he should not have difficulties with those subjects if he took them seriously. He took classes, passed, and then took the entrance examination to the then University of London (now University of Ibadan) and passed.

Thus, he gained admission into the prestigious University College Ibadan in 1953, to study medicine. From there on,

he blazed the trail on his long and remarkable surgical journey into the top medical institutions in the world and into the lexicon of the world's medical archives. He was among the first set of Nigerian students to complete their entire medical education in Ibadan, Nigeria, obtaining the MBBS (London) degree in 1960. Furthermore, he was the youngest in his graduating class of 1960 and the best graduating student in chemical pathology.

Subsequently, he embarked on further training as a postgraduate fellow in anatomy, general surgery resident at Hammersmith, London; neurotrauma training at the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford; and neurosurgery training at the North Staffordshire (1963–1964). Adelola passed the Royal College of Physicians (MRCP Edinburgh) in neurology that qualified him as a neurologist in 1965, and the Royal College of Surgeons of England (FRCS) in 1966 that qualified him as a neurosurgeon. As a result, he preferred to refer to himself as a neurological surgeon (a neurologist who operates on the nervous system) rather than a neurosurgeon.

In 1967, Professor Adeloye returned to UCH, Ibadan, Nigeria, to join the Department of Neurosurgery under the tutelage of the late distinguished and pioneering Professor E.L. Odeku. He rose through the ranks and became the Professor of Neurological Surgery in October 1972 and Head of Surgery (1974–77). He became a Rockefeller Research Fellow in Experimental Teratology at the University of Cincinnati, USA (1972–73) and Ratanji Dalai Scholar of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (1973–74) for the study of central nervous system malformations (Spina Bifida Cystica). Furthermore, he obtained a Master's degree in surgery (MS) at the University of London in 1973, with a thesis on neurosurgery.

In 1987, he worked as a consultant neurosurgeon at King Faisal Specialist Hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and served as the Head of Neurosurgery at Al-Adan Government Hospital in Kuwait (1988–1990). In 1991, he became the Foundation Professor and Head of Surgery at the University of Malawi, where he also served as the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Acting Principal of the College of Medicine, University of Malawi. He was also a representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Malawi.

Professor Adeloye was an Honorary Fellow, The American College of Surgeons (2009); Foundation Member and President, Pan-African Association of

Neurological Sciences (PAANS) (1972, 2000–2002); President, Neurosurgery Section, Nigerian Society of Neurological Sciences (NSNS) (1988); President, Surgical Association of Malawi (1998–2000); and Foundation President, Neurosurgical Society of East and Central Africa (1999). He was elected as Honorary President for Life of the World Federation of Neurosurgical Societies (WFNS) in September 2001, becoming the first Black African to be so honored. He was also Honorary President for Life of the PAANS, the Nigerian Society of Neurological Sciences (NSNS), and the Nigerian Academy of Neurological Surgeons (NANS).

Professor Adeloje was a prolific writer and author. He published extensively on neurosurgery and the history of West African Medicine. Furthermore, he has written books about his loved ones like his father (*Village genius*) and his late wife (*The biography of Codanda Kamala Kalappa Adeloje*). He had authored over 400 published manuscripts and contributed to textbooks of medicine and surgery, including self-named description of a novel disease in the annals of world's medical archives. He was the Editor-in-Chief of the *Nigerian Medical Journal* (1980–1990); Sub-Editor, *East and Central African Journal of Surgery*; and Member, Editorial Board of multiple scientific journals that include *Neurosurgery*, *African Journal of Neurological Sciences*, *Paraplegia*, *Child's Nervous System*, *Brazilian Journal of Neurosurgery*, *African Journal of Medicine and Medical Sciences*, *Dokita*, etc.

Professor Adeloje was married to the late Dr. Kamala Codanda Kappala Adeloje, a medical graduate of Madras University in India (1967) and a pediatrician. She was also the Head of the Employee Health Center (Jaja Clinic), at the University of Ibadan campus. They had three children and six grandchildren. The city of Madras in India is now referred to as Chennai.

Professor Adeloje, you were simply a person who possessed lifetime humanistic qualities of brilliance, compassion, dedication, and optimism. In our hearts, you will forever remain our teacher of teachers and professor of professors. While on earth, you had ensured that your name Adeloje is fully engraved in the lexicon of the world's medical literature; we pray that the good Lord engraves your name among his greatest servants and grant you glory, everlasting peace and eternal life in heaven. We celebrate you, Professor Adeloje, rest in peace.

Reference

1. Adeloje A, Odeku EL. Congenital subgaleal cysts over the anterior fontanelle in Nigerians. *Arch Dis Child* 1971; 46(245): 95–8. doi: 10.1136/adc.46.245.95

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