

Milestone in Dermatology and Allied Subject in Nigeria

Adekunle George

THE first dermatologist to work in Nigeria was George H.V Clarke in the mid-1950s. He was based in Lagos. Organized training and teaching and research in dermatology was first established at the University of Ibadan in the western region of Nigeria in collaboration with the Institute of Dermatology, St John's London

The first set of dermatologists from the Institute on secondment who established dermatology as a discipline at the University of Ibadan were Roger RM Harman, as lecturer, and GC Wells, as the Consultant, in 1962. The first indigenous dermatologist was Anezi Okoro who turned 91 years in 2020. The first female was Yetunde M Olumide⁽¹⁾. The first and still the only department of dermatology was at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife in the western region of Nigeria, started by a German trained dermatologist F Soyinka, the younger brother of Nigeria's first (and only) Nobel Laureate.

A sub department of Dermatology was established at University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital (UNTH). The sub department was headed by Prof Anezi Okoro from 1970–1988. He was later joined by Prof Egere. The first leprologist of note in Nigeria was George Stanley Browne, a medical missionary. Many ground breaking research on leprosy actually emanated from Nigeria especially on the aspect of medication⁽²⁾. Stanley Browne

worked briefly as an associate lecturer (1963-1965) under Prof Alexander Brown at the University of Ibadan.

About three decades ago, the population of trained dermatologists in Nigeria was under 15. Professor Anezi Okoro was the foundation president of Nigerian Association of Dermatologists. He was followed by Gabriel O Alabi. Other dermatologists of the era were Obasi Erem, Akinsanya B, Adolphus Somorin, Egere, Yetunde Olumide, Emmanuel Kubeyinje, and Kunle George. It was around this period that harsh economic climate in Nigeria forced most of these dermatologists to greener pasture in the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and UAE (United Arab Emirate). The light of dermatology in Nigeria dimmed and was virtually extinguished. Earlier on Ryan(3) writing in the International Journal of dermatology has commented in 1990 that many African countries still do not have a single dermatologist!

The commencement of postgraduate medical trainings in Nigeria and the West African sub region has breathed life into dermatology as a discipline in Nigeria. Resuscitation of NAD as a profession came about with a conference in Benin about 15 years ago. Felix Oresanya was voted as president. After his tenure, Adebola Ogunbiyi came on board followed by the immediate past

president, Grace Okudo. The current President is Muhammad Tahir.

From a population of less than 15 dermatologists three decades ago, the population of NAD is currently 161. NAD has made great strides in the academic (teaching of students and research) and professional life (training of residents) in Nigeria. It has a website and Teledermatology is being experimented on for teaching and clinic pathological service in Nigeria.

Recently two NAD members, Y M Olumide and Abel Onunu were elected as two of the nearly a hundred Foundation members of Nigerian Academy of Medicine (NAMED).

A total of six dermatology books have been published by four members of NAD (Anezi Okoro, Adolphus Somorin, YM Olumide and Shehu Yussuf). Thirty years ago Adolphus Somorin published a quarterly magazine/newsletter for dermatologists in the West African Sub region. Today NAD has its own publication Nigerian Journal of Dermatology with about 15 editions in place and poised to go online in a few weeks' time. It is of note that there are only a few dermatology journals in Africa and these are found in Egypt, South Africa, Nigeria and Sudan.

REFERENCES

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