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Special Release

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OBITUARY

PROFESSOR EMERITUS THEOPHILUS OLADIPO OGUNLESI (1923 - 2023)

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor K. O. Adebowale, mni, FAS, announces the transition of Professor Emeritus Theophilus Oladipo Ogunlesi, a distinguished retired Professor of Medicine at the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan and a Consultant Cardiologist at the University College Hospital, Ibadan. The sad event occurred on Thursday, 19 January, 2023. He was aged 99 years.

Late Professor Emeritus Theophilus Oladipo Ogunlesi was born on 12 July, 1923 in Sagamu, Ijebu Remo Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria. He attended St. Paul's Primary School in Sagamu (1930-36) and C.M.S. Grammar School in Lagos (1936-40). He enrolled at Yaba Higher College (1941-42) for his pre-med and subsequently attended the Yaba Medical School from (1942-47). He qualified as a Licentiate in Surgery and Medicine (L.S.M.) with distinction in Medicine and Public Health in 1947.

He worked as an Assistant Medical Officer, Medical Officer and Specialist Physician in the then Western and Northern Regions of Nigeria after which he went for his postgraduate medical education at the Postgraduate Medical School of the University of London (1956-1957) and the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, USA (1967-1968).

His professional qualifications and awards included Member of the Royal College of Physicians, London (MRCP Lond.), 1958; MRCP Edin., 1958; Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, Edinburgh (FRCP Edin), 1962; FRCP (Lond.), 1970; (first Nigerian Fellow of the London College), FMCP (NIG) Foundation Fellow; and FWACP (1978) Foundation Fellow. He was a pioneer Fellow of the Academy of Science (FAS) and was awarded the merit award, Officer of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (OFR) in 1983.

Scholarships and prizes received during his undergraduate and postgraduate education included Sir Walter Johnson's Prize in Public Health, Yaba Higher College, Nigeria (1946); Sir Walter Johnson's Prize in Medicine, Yaba Higher College, Nigeria (1947); Blair-Atkin's (1947), class proficiency prize, Yaba Higher College, Nigeria (1947); Rockefeller Travelling Fellowship, 1963; WHO Research Fellowship in Cardiology, University of Minnesota, USA (1968) and Ford Foundation Travelling Fellowship to India, Pakistan and the Far East (1971).

Professor Ogunlesi started his career in the Department of Medicine, University of Ibadan in 1961. He became an Associate Professor in 1962, and a full Professor in 1965. He was also an honorary consultant to the University College Hospital (UCH) since 1961 until his retirement. He was the Head of Department of Medicine from 1969-1972 and retired from the Department in 1983. He was later appointed an Emeritus Professor of Medicine in 1986.

He excelled as the Director of the Ibarapa Community Health Project of the University of Ibadan of which he was a co-founder with the late Professor Alexander Brown. An article in the LANCET in 1965, described the Ibarapa Project "as a major breakthrough in medical teaching in Africa and praised the far-seeing Faculty (of Medicine) in Ibadan" for making a move which could well provide a pattern for future medical training throughout the developing world.

Professor Ogunlesi served in many other capacities in matters related to health, education and research, some of which include the following. He was adviser to the Federal Government of Nigeria on Medical Education (1980-1983); First President of the National Postgraduate College of Nigeria (1980-1984); Member, National Implementation Committee for the health sector of the 3rd National Development plan of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1975-1979); Member, Management Board of the University College Hospital, Ibadan (1969-1972); and Member (representing the University of Ibadan Medical School) in the Nigeria Medical Council (1975-1979). He was also Member, Governing Council, University of Nigeria, Nsukka 1984; Special Member (medical expert/adviser), Ibarapa Local Government Council (1972-1975). He was awarded the honorary chieftaincy titles "Baasegun (Father of Medicine) of both the Ibarapa Division of Oyo State and the Remo Division of Ogun State. This was in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the communities as a specialist physician.

He was an active member of many professional societies. He was Past President, Association of Physicians of Nigeria; former National Vice-President and State Chairman, Nigeria Medical Association; and Member, Nigeria Medical Council (1975-1979); Member, UCH Board of Management (1966-1972); Member, Nigeria Cardiac Society; Secretary for Nigeria Royal Society for Tropical Medicine and Hygiene since 1965; Member, International Society for Hypertension; and Member, WHO Scientific Advisory Committee on Cardiovascular Diseases (1969-1972).

He authored and co-authored many papers and articles on various aspects of General Medicine, Health Care Systems and Medical Education in both local and international journals.

Professor Ogunlesi did not just follow a ready-made path, but instead, he went to where there was no existing one and left a TRAIL.

Professor Ogunlesi was a family man. He was married to late Mrs. Olorunfemi Ogunlesi and they had 7 children.

May his gentle soul rest in peace. Amen.

Lying-in-State: Wednesday, 12 April, 2023

Trenchard Hall, University of Ibadan

Time: 9:00 am - 10:00 a.m.

University College Hospital, Ibadan

Time: 11:00 am - noon

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