

Alleged medical negligence: Family of late Shell engineer demands justice, \$100m



By Innocent Anaba

The family of the late Mr. Eto Obhuo, a former engineer with Shell Petroleum Development Company, SPDC, has demanded justice and compensation from the oil giant and its allied entities over his death, which they alleged was caused by gross medical negligence.

In a pre-action letter dated September 19, 2025, written by their solicitors, Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa, SAN, the family is demanding \$100 million as compensation for the alleged wrongful death of their son and benefactor.

According to the letter obtained by Vanguard, Obhuo was rushed to Shell Industrial Area Hospital, Rumuobiakani, Port Harcourt, on June 16, 2011, where he was admitted but died barely 15 hours later while under the care of the company's medical personnel.

The family alleged that medical reports, inquiries and documented findings showed that his death was not natural but resulted from what they described as "gross and horrific medical negligence" by SPDC's medical staff.

Citing police investigation reports and the interim findings of the Medical and Dental Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, the solicitors listed several alleged acts of negligence, including failure to obtain informed consent before administering medication, non-disclosure of drug risks and dosages, unauthorised insertion of airway adjuncts, inadequate monitoring that led to aspiration, and failure to provide timely intervention despite signs of respiratory distress.

They further claimed that discrepancies in medical case notes and post-mortem records suggested attempts to conceal likely criminal liability rather than ensure transparency.

Obhuo, who died at age 32, was described as a brilliant scholar who graduated as the best student of Rivers State University of Science and Technology before joining Shell, with a promising career cut short and dependents left in hardship.

The family lamented that despite earlier correspondence in 2021 in which SPDC, through its solicitors, indicated willingness for an amicable settlement, no concrete action has been taken to address their grievances.

Among their demands are full disclosure of medical records, explanation of hospital procedures, release of internal investigation reports, payment of all accrued death benefits to the estate, and compensation of \$100 million for loss, trauma and dependency.

The letter, which serves as a 14-day pre-action notice, was delivered to Renaissance Africa Energy Company Limited, said to have taken over Shell's operations, on September 30, 2025, and also served on Shell Plc's London office via DHL on October 1, 2025.

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The family warned that failure to respond within the stipulated period would lead to both civil and criminal proceedings against the company.