

# FMC Asaba under fire over death of mother of twins

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The twins left behind by late Rita Uchebego

An Asaba-based surveyor, Mr. Ngozi Uchebuego, whose wife and mother of twin girls died shortly after delivery at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Asaba, Delta State, has alleged negligence by medical personnel at the hospital and called for the dismissal of the medical director and four other doctors.

While the death of the housewife raises some controversies, the hospital management, however, through the Acting Medical Director, Dr. Victor Osiatuma, has maintained that she died of blood transfusion reaction, denying claims of negligence.

At a media conference in Asaba on Friday, Mr Uchebego, who wedded Rita on 11th of June 2016, said, "On discovery of her pregnancy, we proceeded to register for ante-natal services at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Asaba, and one Dr. Ojenuwa Sunday Abiodun was assigned to her as the overseeing consultant."

But when the hospital went on strike, one of their church members, Albert Omate, recommended Graceland Specialist Hospital/Maternity to him, where he met one Dr. Maduakor, who he later discovered was as a consultant obstetrician/gynaecologist at the Federal Medical Centre (FMC) Asaba.

However, he said the strike action at the FMC was called-off, prompting his wife to resume antenatal classes under Dr. Ojenuwa her consultant.

“But on Monday March 6, 2017, my wife went for antenatal check up where Dr. Ojenuwa discovered that her blood pressure was 160/100mmHg, and advised that she should be admitted in order to monitor her blood pressure till the following day.”

The following day, Mr. Uchebuego said he requested his mother-in-law to join him at the hospital but to his surprise, he met his wife passing through excruciating pains. “This got me terrified, and when I asked what the problem was, I was told that she had been induced by the nurse on duty on Dr. Ojenuwa’s instruction. Eventually on March 8, 2017, he said his wife was booked for an emergency caesarean section after two failed unauthorized inducements.

“I was asked to sign a document, but more than an hour after I signed the document, nothing had been done to my wife, who at this stage was groaning in pains.”

“When I was told that the doctor who would perform the operation had still not come despite calls to him, I enquired to know who he was, and it turned out to be Dr Maduakor, my wife’s private doctor. This made me happy and I called him. He sounded friendly initially but when I told him that I was at the Federal Medical Center Asaba and my wife was the patient they just called him about, his tone changed and he dropped the call.

“We waited endlessly for Maduakor despite the fact that he was supposed to be on call at that moment. About 20 minutes later, I called again and passionately pleaded with him to come yet he did not show up. Fortunately, at about 12:00noon one Dr Adigba came and took my wife in for the operation,” Uchebuego narrated.

“At about 1:30pm, my twin baby girls arrived while the surgery ended at about 2:00pm. My wife was wheeled out of the theater to the O&G ward with a pint of blood connected to her body,” he said.

He said he was shocked when he got back to the ward at about 6:30pm and saw that the blood being transfused to his wife had been disconnected.

When he asked why, one nurse Egbuobi who was on duty responded with cold silence. He allegedly got alarmed by the treatment and demanded to see the person in charge but the nurse sent him out of the ward, claiming he was disturbing the patients.

Uchebuego, who stayed with his wife at the ward till about 2:00am on 9th of March, 2017 before going home to get a little rest, said his wife called him at about 4:52am to come and help her with the oxygen fixed on her as it was not properly connected thereby causing her great discomfort.

“I arrived the hospital at about 5:05am and met my wife struggling with the oxygen fixed on her. She tearfully beckoned on me to come and assist her. I did not know anything about oxygen so I shouted for help. Nurse Egbuobi shouted back at me, saying, “Are you not the husband? Go and bring blood. I told her that the half pint of blood was still there and not connected to my wife; moreover, my wife was complaining of oxygen while she was talking about blood. But she insisted that I should go and pay and bring receipt before they can connect blood. So I ran out to pay for blood.

“I got back to the ward with the receipt of payment only to see nurses surrounding my wife’s bed. I quickly ran to Dr. Okorie to inquire from him why they refused to reconnect the blood to my wife despite her critical state, and he exclaimed ‘Bottlenecks’,” he recounted.

Uchebuego said Dr. Maduakor showed up about ten minutes later and went straight to his wife’s file at her bed side, directed the nurses to remove the drugs as they all disappeared and new set of ward attendants took over for the day’s work and rolled his wife away to the morgue.

Deeply grieved by the alleged callous acts of the FMC medical personnel, which led to the death of his wife, Mr. Uchebuego thus resolved to seek justice and redress, demanding that the perpetrators be brought to book.

He went to the medical director of the hospital, Dr. Victor Osiatuma, the next day but could not have audience with him until 17th March 2017, with the MD promising to look into the incident.

When he felt that justice would not be served in the matter, he engaged the services of a lawyer but couldn’t meet the financial burden before a

team of five lawyers from Reuben Izeze and Partners took up the case on pro bono basis.

The team of lawyers, led by Barr Dumbili Chinonso Emmanuel, told journalists they had forwarded petitions to the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, Federal Ministry of Health, House of Representatives Committee on Public Petitions, Chairman Senate Committee on Health, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, and the United Nations Development Programme.

In response to the MDCN's panel of investigation, Dr Ojenuwa Sunday Abiodun, stated that upon examining her condition on the 6th day of March 2017, he discovered that she had a high B.P of 160/100mmHg, so he called a conference of the medical practitioners in the antenatal group in order to take a concrete decision.

However, the senior consultant said two out of the six doctors were absent as usual without any excuse from the conference, stating that the two doctors were in the habit of abandoning their duty posts, knowing the Medical Director, Dr Victor Osiatuma, protects them irrespective of their official misdemeanor.

Dr Ojenuwa also stated that his instruction was that some investigations would be done by Dr Anunobi on the 7th and 8th before induction on the 9th, after the test result must have been communicated to him. It was shocking when he discovered that the tests were either not carried out or the outcome not communicated to him as instructed before the induction was done.

In his own statement on oath sworn to at the Delta State High Court, Asaba Judicial Division on 24th July 2017, Dr Maduakor Godwin Chukwuma revealed amongst other things that the late woman was induced as early as 6:20am on the 7th of March 2017 as against the earlier instructed date of 9th March 2017. That as at 7:30 am of that same 7/3/17, the urinalysis investigation which ought to come first before the inducement was then conducted and same revealed that the late pregnant woman had as high as 2 pluses of Proteinuria.

The petitioners wondered why Dr Maduakor failed to state the express instruction of Dr Ojenuwa on the late woman's file and why she was booked for emergency caesarean section without stating who booked her for it.

Meanwhile, at the investigative hearing of the House of Representative Committee on public petitions, Dr Maduakor stated that he was never around the patient, during her stay at the hospital because he had an injury on his finger and sought the medical director's permission to be absent, which was granted.

But in another twist, Maduakor stated he was around and even at the theatre, revealing contradictions, especially in the computation of time given in his statement on oath that he was called by 6:25am on 9/03/2017, informing him that the patient was gasping for breath, whereas he still went on to state that she died at 6:15am.

According to Mr. Uchebuego, his wife's case note stated that she died of blood transfusion reaction as certified by Dr Maduakor, whereas the medical lab scientists of the same hospital, where the blood was procured, recrossed and matched, confirmed that the blood was compatible and could not react.

Daily Trust check revealed that the nurse on duty, L. A. Egbuobi, was issued with a query, on April 3, 2017, over the woman's death by the Assistant Director (Administration) on behalf of the medical director.

Another complication in the saga was the testimony of Dr. Longway, the senior consultant Anesthesiologist, who stated that he went on to evaluate and prep Mrs. Uchebuego for caesarean section without her case note, but had to call to ascertain the status of some contents of the absent case note from Dr Maduakor in respect of the emergency status, grade of caesarean section, findings of last clinical examination by obstetricians etc.

Meanwhile, the management of the Federal Medical Centre Asaba, on the heels of Mrs. Uchebuego's death, constituted a two-man external panel made up of Prof. Fasuba of OAU Teaching Hospital and Dr Ande of UBTH, to investigate the death amongst other recent maternal deaths recorded in FMC Asaba.

The panel has since completed its job and came up with a report which has been a secret document, stirring the petitioners to seek media intervention, alleging that the hospital management refused to reveal the outcome of the report, which they suspect is being used to protect some doctors.

According to the petitioners, the MD of FMC Asaba, Dr Victor Osiatuma, was asked to submit a copy of the said report to the House committee on public petitions at Abuja on two occasions but he failed to do so.

Dr. Osaituma stated that there was no cover up as insinuated by the petitioners, explaining that his alleged refusal to make the panel report available was because it has to pass through bureaucratic process, to be presented first to the Minister for Health before it is made public.