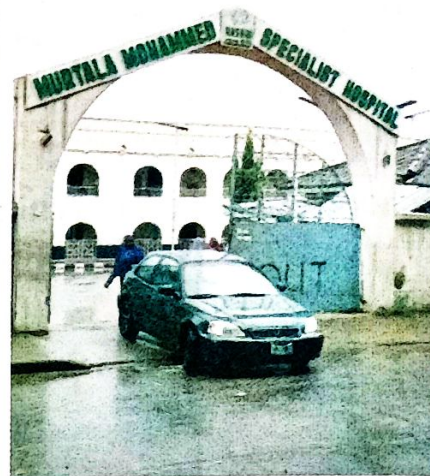


FEATURE



■ The deceased, Sha'awa Abdulmumin and the four children she left behind



Patient's death raises dust in Kano hospital

- 'My sister carried dead baby for 2 days unattended to'
- Hospital management launches investigation

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Sha'awa Abdulmumin, a pregnant mother of four, had gone to the Murtala Muhammad Specialist Hospital in Kano with the hope that she would return home with the baby that had been kicking in her womb for the last few months; but not only did she lose the baby, she did not leave the hospital alive.

Her sister, Zainab, who was with her on that tortuous journey, believes that had the hospital given Sha'awa the care she deserved from September 2 when she got to the facility, the unfortunate incident would have been avoided. She said the hospital staff exhibited medical negligence in the way her sister was treated.

It was gathered that the baby died less than 24 hours after Sha'awa got to the hospital but it was not evacuated until two days later, hours before the mother also passed away on September 5.

According to the latest data by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Nigeria has the fourth highest maternal mortality rate (576 per 100,000) and the world's second highest infant mortality rate (69 per 1,000).

Zainab and several concerned Kano citizens said the death of the 30-year-old Sha'awa and her baby was one too many and could have been avoided. They alleged that the hospital had been dispensing services below expectation.

Zainab narrated that her sister had called her after her 'water broke' but said she was not feeling labour contractions (popularly known as labour pains), so they

decided to go to the hospital. On getting there, it was discovered that not only was the baby in a breech position and weighing over 4kg, the amniotic sac, which contains the fluid colloquially referred to as water breaking, was already empty. As such, the medical personnel on duty decided to offer external cephalic version (ECV), a procedure where health care professionals try to turn the baby to a head-down position.

Zainab, who is also pregnant, said that from this point they felt the hospital staff were not following the best procedure because they felt a caesarean section should have been recommended immediately.

"She had gone through appendicitis surgery before, so no matter how little the problem was, she should have undergone a caesarean section.

"Later in the morning, they told us that the boy had died, and for that reason they would go for operation. Thereafter, they requested for a blood bag for the operation, which they said would be enough because she had sufficient blood at that moment. And we bought it for them," she said.

Zainab said they became worried because hours after the blood was gotten, the operation had not been carried out and nobody was coming around to prepare Sha'awa for the procedure. She added that they were told at one point that since the baby had died, there was no urgency in the case anymore.

According to her, when she confronted a doctor on duty, he rebuffed her, asking if he was the one that asked them to get the

blood, insisting that he would not carry out any other caesarean section after the third one for the day.

"I kept on following him throughout the night but my effort did not yield any result. She (Sha'awa) spent that night with a dead baby in her womb. Her abdomen later started swelling.

"She was there from Friday to Sunday but did not undergo any operation. It was on Sunday that the doctor on duty decided to carry out the operation. Maybe the doctor was compassionate about her situation because she is a woman. She asked us to bring the blood. Earlier, they requested a bag of blood, but at that point they requested for seven bags due to the blood she had lost.

"Before Magrib (the second to the last Islamic prayers around 6:30pm), she was called for the operation. After they took her in, the doctor who led the team came out and asked for her husband. We knew that we have signed everything in agreement. She told us that Sha'awa's survival chances had gone beyond the expected level because she was in an abnormal condition and unconscious," she narrated.

It took just about 30 minutes to bring out the dead baby, but the entire operation procedure lasted for over five hours.

The experience was traumatic for Zainab, who is also about eight months pregnant, especially as she watched two other women give up the ghost while her sister was in the operation theatre.

"A woman who had given birth to twins lost her life while waiting for my sister to come out of the

room. I was so devastated seeing that woman die," she said.

After her sister's operation, she was wheeled into the recovery room. She had displayed signs of recovery, to the point that she had already started taking tea, but when Zainab returned to the room in the morning from their car where she passed the night, she met her mother trying to resuscitate Sha'awa.

"She later started vomiting, and when I called the attention of the nurses and a doctor, they did not have anything to check her —no stethoscope, no oxygen, no ventilator and other things. When she started losing breath, they started thinking of where to get a stethoscope, but they couldn't find any. They later found one on the ground floor to check and confirm

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that she had died.

"It was a devastating experience for me. We were treated badly, and our time was wasted, among many other things. In the end, we lost our sister's life due to negligence," Zainab said, while appealing to all concerned persons and authorities to help her get justice for her sister.

Last week, her call-for-help audio recording had gone viral and became one of the most forwarded voice notes on WhatsApp.

We'll ensure justice – Female lawyers

Responding to this call, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), Kano State chapter, said they would not rest until justice is served in the case. The chairperson of the chapter, Bilkisu Suleiman, told *Daily Trust Saturday* that the federation would meet with Zainab and stakeholders, not only in the legal and human rights sector but also the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) to look at the facts and take the necessary action.

Similarly, the Kano and Jigawa Professionals Forum has decided to look into the matter. It was gathered that the forum has already set up a five-man committee, headed by a former president of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), Abubakar B. Mahmud, a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), while the renowned professor of medicine, Musa Borodo and former president of the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), Baba Dantiye, among others, are members.

Hospital Management Board initiates investigation

Efforts to get the reaction of the hospital management on the allegations were not successful at the time of filing this report as the chief medical director of the facility, Hussaini Muhammad, did not respond to calls and text messages sent to him. However, the public relations officer of the Kano State Hospital Management Board, Ibrahim Abdullahi, told *Daily Trust* on Sunday that they had already constituted a committee to investigate the allegations.

He said the committee began sittings on Wednesday and the report is expected before the end of next week.