

Controversy trails medical student's death

Posted By: JOSHUA OBELLE, MSONTER ANZAA on: August 06, 2015 In: Campus Life No Comments



•The late Nicholas

The circumstances surrounding the death of a medical student of the Benue State University (BSU), Nicholas Idoko Ejugwu, have given room for speculations. Some students believe the late Nicholas may have committed suicide, having spent 10 years in the medical college, unable to pass the professional examinations. His family has debunked the suicide story, saying his death was natural. MSONTER ANZAA (400-Level Medicine) and JOSHUA OBELLE (300-Level Mass Communication) report.

What caused the road accident that killed Nicholas Idoko Ejugwu? The 400-Level Medicine and Surgery student of the Benue State University (BSU) reportedly committed suicide after he failed several times to pass his professional examinations. But, his friends and family are not happy with the theory, claiming the student's death was an accident.

It was widely reported that the late Nicholas resorted to suicide having been withdrawn from the medical school after 10 years in the college. CAMPUSLIFE gathered that the late Nicholas was disturbed by results of pathology and pharmacology professional examinations released on July 22. He and three other students were advised to withdraw from the college, having exhausted the number of times a student can sit for the exams.

Students dumped the body at the Vice-Chancellor's Office. But, the family dismissed the speculation, saying Nicholas' death was natural.

Speaking with CAMPUSLIFE, Michael Ejugwu, the deceased's father, said the accident was caused by a stationary truck.

He said: "Our son did not commit suicide. He was driving on Abu King Shuluwa Road on high speed, without knowing that a truck had broken down in the middle of the road. When he saw the truck, he tried to manoeuvre but was faced by the road divider. Because he did not have his seat belt on, he was flung out and died on the spot. A passerby was crushed by the tossing car."

Adams Ocheme, the late Nicholas' friend, who was with him a few minutes before the accident, also debunked the suicide story. He said: "We were four students, who went to see the Dean of Pre-clinical Science, Prof John Ibu, on Friday, July 24, to interact with him on our results, which were released two days earlier. But as the school was on strike, we did not meet the dean; so, we all returned to my off-

campus hostel.

“From there, we called the dean and he answered. It was Nicholas, who spoke to him. He told the dean we would like to meet him for advice on the outcome of the examination. Prof Ibu said lecturers were on strike but added that the results were provisional and we could make our complaints whenever the school resumed.

“Before Nicholas left, we ate egg and bread together. We told him to stay around till Monday when we expected the lecturers would call off the strike. When he ate the food, I realised he was depressed. He told me he did not eat for two days because of the results. I went into my kitchen to cook more food and the rest of them played games together in my room.”

The late Nicholas, Adam said, stood up after the games to go home. He copied some movies from his friend's laptop to keep his mind off the “bad” results.

Adams added: “I prevailed on him to stay and use my laptop instead, but he said he also needed to take his bath and change clothes. We bade him goodbye only to get a call a few minutes later that he was lying dead on the roadside. He was going home with an intention to return in a short time. I don't believe the story that he killed himself over the bad results. There are several options outside the medical school, which he could benefit from.”

Andrew Iorkyaan, national president of Benue Medical Students Association (BEMSA), also debunked the suicide story, saying: “Suicide is completely out of the story. The late Nicholas could not have driven himself to death. It is unfortunate that the media reported suicide story.”

Andrew said the students' reaction should not have been interpreted to mean he committed suicide, adding that the reaction was to express their frustration on the circumstances surrounding the death.

He went on: “Before the accident, we held a congress and discussed the results. Some people were analysing the event and concluded it was suicide, but we have been with him for nine years. Nicholas was a person who advised students and encouraged them. It is unfair to accuse someone, who cannot defend himself, of committing suicide.”

President of Benue State University Medical Students Association (BESUMSA), Moses Agbulu, said it was wrong for people to conclude that Nicholas killed himself because of his withdrawal from the medical college.

It was gathered that, after a congress held by students to discuss the results, the news of Nicholas' death hit the campus. In anger, the students mobilised to the morgue of the Benue State University Teaching Hospital, where the body was being deposited and marched with a coffin to the Vice-Chancellor's (VC's) office. They spent a night at the office, demanding to see the VC.

The students demanded the suspension of the withdrawal until the medical college started to graduate its students; organisation of re-sit examinations and provision of a definite date for the final accreditation of the teaching hospital.

The VC, Prof Charity Angya, who met with students in front of her office, condoled with them, directing that the withdrawal be suspended. She also assured the students that the college would hold a graduation before the end of the year.

Since its inception more than 10 years ago, the medical college is yet to graduate doctors. This has led to accumulation of classes over the years. The final year students are due to complete their programmes in the next two months, the final accreditation of the medical school is required for their graduation.

Speaking at a requiem mass for the late Nicholas at the Good Shepherd Catholic Chaplaincy, the Provost of the College of Health Sciences, Prof Simeon Adebisi, said the strike by resident doctors was responsible for the shifting of accreditation dates earlier fixed. He said the management was in touch with the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) and was expecting a visit in the second or third week of this month.

The remains of the late Nicholas have since been buried in his hometown in Ogbadibo Local Government Area of Benue State. What caused the road accident that killed Nicholas Idoko Ejugwu? The 400-Level Medicine and Surgery student of the Benue State University (BSU) reportedly committed suicide after he failed several times to pass his professional examinations. But, his friends and family are not happy with the theory, claiming the student's death was an accident.

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