

Mother, hospital trade words over son's death

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Seeing my son die in my presence was an awful experience. I screamed for help but I got no response. My son convulsed in my eyes; I saw him breathe his last. I watched helplessly as he writhed in pains.”

These were the words of Mrs Temiloluwa Adewunmi, whose son, Oluwamurewa, died last Saturday at Ayodele Hospital in Fagba, Lagos.

The 27-year-old trader said her son was placed on oxygen immediately he got to the hospital, adding that he died after power outage. Since then, she said, the hospital has refused to release his body.

Narrating her ordeal, she said her six-month-old boy started running temperature sometime last week and was taken to Ifako General Hospital.

“When we got to the general hospital last Wednesday, we were told he should be admitted but there was no bed space. I bought the drug prescribed by the physician and my son’s temperature returned to normal.

“I was so shocked on Saturday morning when his temperature became high again. As my husband and I wanted to take him back to the general hospital, there was traffic gridlock so we resorted to Ayodele Hospital since it was in our neighbourhood,” she said.

Mrs. Adewunmi said when they got to the hospital, they were asked to pay N5,000 for card, adding: “My husband paid N2,000 and excused himself to use the Automated Teller Machine (ATM). Immediately my son was attended to. He was placed on drip and oxygen. Even when the doctor asked if he was convulsing, I told him he has never convulsed. Within few minutes, my son began to sweat and I felt he was getting better. The doctors also assured me he was going to be fine.

"As I sat beside him on his sick bed, there was power outage and I noticed the oxygen stopped moving. I ran out of the room to call for help but nobody answered me. I even went to knock the doctor's door but no one was there. The nurses said they were going to put on the generator but it came on after 30 minutes. I removed the hose passed through his nose to aid breathing to allow breeze blow him. Before I removed it, he had already stretched his arms, I didn't know he was about to leave me.

"It was later doctors came in, one of them placed his hands on my son's chest but he was no more. I realised the owner of the hospital was just describing where the heart was to the doctor attending to my son. Before they put on the generator, it was my phone's light I used to see how my son was doing.

"I have never attended the hospital before, even when I was pregnant, my friends advised me not to go there", she said.

Mrs Adewunmi said when the family went to collect her son's remains on Sunday, the hospital allegedly refused and demanded N40,000 before the body could be removed.

The bereaved mother said: "When we got there, I was shocked to see my son's body beside the hospital's dust bin. Even when my husband shouted that his son be given to him, the hospital management called police officers from Oko-Oba division to take him away. It is unfair. I have not been able to sleep. I see my son wherever I go. I want to bury him. I just got married last year and he is my first child. At three months, Murewa already had two set of tooth. He was a cute gentle boy. Whenever I took him to the market, he understood I was busy. He never disturbed me. I didn't give him any home medication. I was even meant to use the money I had on me to stock my shop but my son is priority. Immediately I noticed his temperature, I went to the general hospital where I spent almost the whole day. I need my son's body."

Her husband, a veterinary doctor, she said, hasn't been himself since the incident.

"I miss my baby, my world and my priority", she said.

The hospital's administration manager, George Abayomi, said the baby was brought in a terrible condition, adding that immediately light went off, the generator came on.

"We have two standby generators in our premises; why should it take us 30 minutes to put on the generator. His parents brought him at the last minute. He died as a result of anaemia heart failure," he said.

Asked why Mr Olabode Adewunmi was detained, he said: "When the father got aware of his son's death, he began to destroy the hospital property and he couldn't be restrained. He promised to burn down the hospital. After he left, he returned around 12:20am with a gallon of petrol which he sprinkled in the reception, it was when we couldn't control him that we invited police officers from Oko-Oba division.

"He came this morning (yesterday) around 9am to take his son's body but we told him he had an outstanding balance to pay. He has to pay the bill of the services rendered. At times, in such cases, we give discount but they are insisting on not paying. He even said if we want to eat the body, we should. The body was taken to a morgue^r in Ikeja on Sunday and we paid N16,000."

Stanley Nwanali, a doctor with the hospital, said the patient's file showed that he was brought in almost in "coma, pale and with an enlarged liver".

The Lagos State Public Advice Centre (PAC) has intervened in the matter, which has been referred to Ministry of Health and Health Facility Monitoring and Accreditation Agency (HEFAMAA) for investigation.