

Mother of two's death during childbirth sparks group's war with Lagos hospital

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The death of Chisom Jane Anakwe (nee Okereke), a mother of two, while trying to give birth to a baby at the Magodo Specialist Hospital, Shagisha, Lagos, on April 30, is now shrouded in controversy. The mother of three and an alumnus of LEAP Africa, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) promoting research on leadership development and entrepreneurship, was said to be a young and vivacious lady aged between 25 and 30 years, who devoted her life to helping indigent kids.

News of her death had surfaced online where the alumni of LEAP Africa put up a post asking for justice, as it was believed that Chisom died in questionable circumstances at the hospital where she was admitted for four days before she went into labour.

According to the statement shared by the alumni association, Chisom was allegedly not attended to when she needed help and the baby in her womb had struggled and died.

The statement released by the alumni body reads in part: "She was left for hours in labour. This happened until her husband created a scene, which eventually caused the doctors to go to her ward, and on inspection, they found that the baby had struggled and died.

"The husband, at this point, requested for a CS, which he paid for and even signed the consent form presented by the hospital. He was then tricked out of the room to go prepare for blood transfusion, and on getting back, he found that the doctors had induced the wife and delivered the dead baby without operation not minding that the CS procedure had been paid for.

"This was without his consent. During the process of delivering the baby, the placenta got ruptured and the doctors left her like that; no further attendance still.

"Shortly after, the husband noticed she was swelling up in her stomach area and called the attention of the doctors who said they were getting ready for a surgery, a preparation that took longer than usual.

“After waiting in vain for the surgical team, the frustrated husband went furiously to the reception to demand why they were wasting time only to discovered that the doctor had sneaked out of the hospital under funny pretences.

“At this point, he got other hospital staff to wheel her out of the hospital, and in that process, Chisom died.”

In a conversation recorded with Chisom’s husband, Chika Anakwe, he recalled the build-up to the event that led to the death of his wife at the hospital.

He said that two months ago when the pregnancy was less than seven months, the Medical Director, Dr Joseph Olamiju, told the late Chisom that her blood pressure was not normal. She went for antenatal and drugs were given to her.

“On the 26th of April, I got back from work and she told me to stay with the kids. She went to the pharmacy to check her blood pressure and it was high. She went again to Magodo Specialist Hospital to see the MD but he was not around. She always wanted the MD to attend to her.

“She went back on Thursday and was admitted. The doctor on duty explained that the pregnancy was almost due and the option was to do a caesarean session (CS) to bring out the baby.

“I gave a go ahead. I was hoping that the CS would have been done by Thursday, but even in the whole of Friday, nothing happened, so I became worried.

“I needed to see the MD (medical director) but he was not around (the MD is also a consultant at LUTH). On Saturday, I came to the hospital and told my wife that she needed to stop taking the BP drugs since the doctor had already recommended CS.”

Asked if the hospital gave him a concrete reason as to why the CS was delayed, he said the doctor on duty informed him that they were waiting for the MD’s arrival. With the unbearable delay and his wife writhing in pain, he thought of taking her to another hospital but the late Chisom advised against the move, saying it was late already.

Anakwe said: “Around 3:30 am, my wife called and said she was in serious pain. I left the kids at home and ran to the hospital. I met the MD and complained but he didn’t respond. Later, they told me that the baby’s heart had dropped. I did not understand, but I saw them trying to do something like a scan on her tummy.

“Then I asked why delay the CS? The doctor told me that the gynaecologist said the estate gate was locked; that he had been trying for more than an hour to get him. That was when it dawned on me that the man was not even

a gynaecologist and so could not operate on my wife.

“I asked him to move my wife to another hospital but he said the person that would drive the ambulance was not around. So I offered to drive it or use my car. We drove the ambulance to the gate of the hospital and as I rushed to get my wife into the ambulance, I didn’t see him again.

“Later, he told me that the gynaecologist would be there in about 10 to 15 minutes, so we waited. I was presented with a CS form, which I filled. They demanded for a N300,000 deposit, but what I had in my hands was not up to that .

“I offered some dollar notes to complete the payment. We moved my wife to the theatre and I was introduced to the surgeon. The MD told me that I needed to go to the lab and prepare blood, since my wife would need blood immediately after the CS.

“I did so and was rushing back when a nurse told me that my wife was in the labour room. She was on oxygen. I asked why the CS was not done and the doctor said he realised it was not the best option and that was why he chose to induce her.”

Anakwe said he later discovered that the MD had left the hospital when he (Anakwe) tried to get further attention upon realising that his wife’s tummy was getting bigger. He said that after making several frantic calls for hours, the MD appeared immediately after his wife died.

Pained by the manner in which his wife died, he is asking for justice. He said: “I don’t know why my wife would die after the baby had come out. I am pained by the manner in which she died. The MD abandoned us in the hospital and went to LUTH when he had an unfinished business in his hospital.

“Honestly I find it very difficult that my wife died the way she did. I know that no matter what I do, my wife will not come back again, but we need to prevent this from happening in the future”.

When our correspondent visited the Magodo Specialist Hospital on Tuesday, the MD was unavailable for comments. But in a response to an email sent to him, he refuted the claims contained in the post on social media.

His response reads: “The management and staff of Magodo Specialist Hospital wish to state that the sensational and graphic postings on the social media about the death of Mrs Chisom Anekwe are untrue. However, as a medical outfit, it is difficult for us to react by giving full details of events without breaching ethical and confidentiality rules. There are also indications that the case has been referred to the Nigeria Medical Association (NMA), the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) and the Lagos State Health Facilities Accreditation and

Monitoring Authority (HEFAMA) for investigation by these statutory bodies. As such, the hospital would not want to act prejudicial to these investigations.

“We are very passionate about the health and lives of our patients. The hospital is well equipped and adequately staffed. We have handled many difficult cases successfully in the past and did our best in this situation. We are greatly distressed and saddened by the death of this young woman who had been our patient over the past five years and had her two babies successfully under our care.

“Our hearts and prayers are with the family. We pray that God will comfort them and grant them the grace and strength to bear this great loss.”

However, the Leap Africa Alumni body has vowed to pursue the case to a logical end in order to ensure that more women are not lost in similar circumstances.

“Life is sacred and those who treat it with recklessness should be called to order. We believe strongly that the authorities need to ensure that lives are taken sacred in hospitals like Magodo Specialist Hospital where such avoidable deaths are recorded”, the group stated.

Efforts to get officials of the NMA to comment on the issue did not succeed, but the Lagos State government has begun investigations into the matter with a view to determining the truth.

According to the State Commissioner for Health, Dr. Jide Idris, the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH) has been asked to step in and investigate the case.

“I’ve asked LUTH to investigate the case and report back to me”, the commissioner told The Nation on the telephone.