

Furore over mysterious death of UK-bound First Class graduate



Mike Odiegwu, Port Harcourt February 24, 2024



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The police in [Rivers State](#) have launched an investigation into the painful death of Rebecca Sekidika, a 24-year-old first class graduate of Microbiology.

The death of Rebecca, a vivacious and brilliant daughter of Sampson Sekidika, who hails from Okirika Local Government Area, Rivers State, occurred at the theatre of Paragon Clinics and Imaging situated in Port Harcourt, the state capital.

Her journey to untimely grave was painful and brief. The promising beautiful girl was hale and hearty when she walked into the hospital's theatre for a minor medical procedure but an hour later, she had become lifeless in a pool of blood like a dead cow on the slaughter slab.

If Rebecca's parents, especially her wealthy father who has been working as a COREN-certified engineer for the Nigeria LNG Limited for about 25 years had the premonition of the danger that lurked around, they would have discouraged their daughter from seeking further inquiries into her minor health problem.

But February 2, 2024 began like a normal day.

Rebecca had advanced her preparations to travel abroad in pursuit of further studies. Her first destination would have been the Brain Station in the UK. She was billed to travel on February 9. Her father had already secured the required visa and paid for her flight and accommodation for a six-month course on Software Engineering.

The plan was that after her six-month course, Rebecca would settle down for her master's degree and her PhD.

Indeed, she had already packed her belongings to take off for her trip before she decided to know her health status and to have her medical record handy. The UK-bound student was already undergoing online classes before the incident.

The only complaint that moved her to seek a medical inquiry about her health was her delayed menstruation. She had gone for some weeks without observing her menses. Hence she became curious and wanted to know why.

Her curiosity took her to Paragon, a hospital serving as a retainer in Port Harcourt for the LNG where her father works. But that singular decision has become a source of agony and regrets for the Sekidikas.

Sekidika, who could not control his tears, recalled that her daughter had gone to the hospital prior to February 2, ran some medical examinations, including a pregnancy test, which turned out to be negative. He said the hospital advised her to return on the aforementioned date for further examination.

The engineer said: “Prior to February 2nd, my daughter had a brief clinical visit to Paragon Clinics and Imaging located at Number 96 Stadium Road.

“The complaint was that she had not seen her menstruation for a while. So she needed to know why. When she had the clinical visit they subjected her to some tests including pregnancy test which came out to be all negative.

“But they called her again to say she needed to see a specialist for the final examination. The specialist booked an appointment with her to come between 12 and 1pm on the 2nd of February for a simple procedure they called hysteroscopy.

“It is just a procedure that involves using a tube and a light bulb through the vagina to check if there is anything in the uterus. It is purely for diagnostic purposes. It takes between 15 to 20 minutes depending on the doctor. They have a monitor to check. It doesn’t involve giving anaesthetic. It doesn’t involve any surgery.”

On the fateful day, Sekidika drove her daughter and her mother (his wife) in his car to the hospital to undergo the procedure. They waited for the doctor for more than four hours but to no avail.

Maybe the long wait was a tell-tale sign for the parents to take their daughter home, but the senior Sekidika was no longer within the hospital; he had gone to attend to some issues within the city.

However, when he called at about 3pm to find out from his wife whether the doctor was around, he was told that they were still waiting for the specialist. In fact, the wife told him that his daughter was already online undergoing a virtual class with other students on her laptop.

At 4pm, the father, who felt that they had waited for too long, raced down to the hospital to take them home.

The traumatised Sekidika said: “I took my daughter. She was healthy. She had no medical condition. I took her with the mother to the clinic. When we got there the doctor didn’t show up between 12 and 1pm.

“I decided to leave them there to go and do one or two things and come back to meet them. At about 3pm, I called my wife and she said the doctor was still not around.

“She said my daughter had even started online classes because she went with her laptop. They were doing online classes because the physical classes would start on Monday.

“She was supposed to travel on the 9th for her masters and PhD. Everything had been arranged, including flights.

“At 4pm, I called and they said the doctor was still not around. I decided to be on my way to go and pick them.”

On getting to the hospital, it was already late. The engineer explained that when he got to the hospital, he was told that her daughter walked into the theatre at about 4:30pm.

He said: “But when I got there close to 5pm, they had already taken her to theatre at about 4:30pm. I asked why theatre and they said it was where they had the monitor.

“Since they started around 4:30pm, by 5pm she should have been out, but she was not out. At 5:30pm my wife heard a shout from the theatre: ‘Rebecca, wake up!’ That could be when she passed, I don’t know.

“We saw them running around, going in and, out and they were not telling us anything. They only told us, ‘Everything is okay. Your daughter is fine.’ We didn’t know she had died.

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“Around 7pm, the doctors came out and broke the sad news to us: ‘Sorry, we did everything we could, your daughter has passed’”.

Sekidika and the wife died temporarily with the news of their daughter’s passage. While the father was numb, lost in thought and gazed motionlessly, the wife was screaming, crying and throwing herself up and down. Where did they go wrong?

The engineer said: “It was as if I was dreaming. I only asked God to wake me up from this bad dream.

“My wife started shouting and throwing herself up and down. During this period, the doctor, anaesthetist and nurses all disappeared at the third floor, leaving us there with the lifeless body.

“They ran, and where they went to, I didn’t know. In the process of shouting and crying, my wife called her sons and told them what happened to their sister. It was around 10pm.

“When we went into the theatre, we saw blood all over my daughter’s body and on the floor. I was confused.

“I have the gory pictures. I didn’t know why the blood. Nobody explained to me.”

Sekidika said while in the confused state, his colleague, who had heard what happened, rushed to the hospital to see him. He said it was the colleague, who dragged him to the office of the doctor and the anaesthetist.

He said: “My colleague came and dragged me down to see the doctor and the anaesthetist, and when we got to them, my colleague asked them what happened. The doctor pointed to the anaesthetist and said he gave her spinal anaesthesia.

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“The doctor said 30 minutes after he gave her, she said she wanted to throw up and from there she started throwing up blood. At that point, the doctor said he became confused, he didn’t know what to do.

“They tried to see how they would manage the situation until she lost too much blood and passed.

“When we came out I was still confused. I didn’t know they were going to give my daughter spinal anaesthesia.

“Experts have already analysed the situation. Spinal anaesthetic is only given during a major operation. My immediate elder sister is a consultant physician. Her husband is a surgeon.

“I could easily go to any other hospital and take care of it. But this hospital is a retainer with my company. The company refers us there.

“We go there for clinical visits. But this does not entail any surgery or any form of opening up. That was why we went to this particular retainer qualified by my own company. I didn’t go there on my own”.

Sekidika said he had to reach out to his sister, the consultant physician, and told her how her niece passed at the hospital

He said: “I told my sister that I didn’t understand what they were saying. It was 12 midnight already. My sister came with her husband, went up and saw the niece and started crying. She almost fainted.

“The husband took her to see the doctor and the anaesthetist that did this. The doctor explained a similar thing that 30 minutes into the procedure he noticed that the girl was throwing up blood.

“This means that in the process of using the tube, they ruptured an artery or a vessel. The anaesthetic was killing her and then the rupture. So she bled throughout.

“My sister turned to the anaesthetist and asked, you gave her spinal anaesthetic; what for? She said even D and C and evacuation are done without anaesthetic.”

Sekidika believes that the hospital killed her daughter out of sheer negligence. But the hospital, in the sighted death certificate it issued to the family, wrote that the girl died out of coronary failure due to pulmonary embolism/vascular rupture.

The engineer has vowed to secure justice. He immediately reported the matter to the police following the advice of his company.

He said the police had begun investigation into the matter, adding that the hospital and persons involved in the painful and untimely death of his daughter must be brought to book.

It was also gathered that the NLNG had opened an independent investigations into the incident with a view to helping the family get justice and reviewing its relationship with the hospital.

The hospital, however, evaded inquiries about the incident. The reporter visited the hospital and demanded to speak to either the Chief Medical Director or the Manager, but the female receptionist said the CMD doubled as the manager.

After filling the visitation form, the receptionist demanded to know the purpose of the visit. When she was told, she made some intercom calls and eventually said the person who was supposed to attend to the inquiry was not on seat.

She took the reporter's telephone number and promised to call him but she failed to do so. When our correspondent called the telephone number on the hospital's website, the receiver, who identified himself as Chima, also promised to relay the inquiry to the management.

The police have since intensified investigation into the circumstances that led to the tragic end of Rebecca.

The Police Public Relations Officer, Grace Iringe-Koko, confirmed that the manager of the hospital had been arrested and two other doctors were invited in connection with Rebecca's death.

Iringe-Koko expressed dismay that an earlier invitation by the police to the doctor and the person that administered the anaesthetic was not honoured.

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She said: "Yes, I can confirm that the manager has been arrested. We have also invited the doctor and one other person as part of our investigation. The matter has been transferred to the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department for proper investigation."

But while the investigation is ongoing, Sekidika and his family are grieving. "If there is something I don't wish my enemy to go through, it is this emotional trauma," he said.

Explaining the bond between him and her later daughter, he said: “She was my second child but my first daughter. We have been together as a close family. I have four, two girls and two boys, but they have taken away one.

“Father-daughter relationship is always very strong. This is someone that was very promising. She had everything going for her. You can imagine someone going for her masters and PhD.

“To send someone to abroad for studies by this time is not easy. You can imagine what I have gone through in opening up all accounts to get her money to send her overseas.

“Imagine the bond that we share as a closely-knit family. She was supposed to have her 25th birthday on the 29th of May. She was the event planner for the mother’s 50th birthday on the 10th of May.

“She said she was going to plan the magazine and monitor everything through zoom.”

Sekidika urged the police to be thorough in their investigation with particular reference to the foul play that dimmed his star.

He said: “I was there when the foul play took place. First and foremost they didn’t tell us they were going to give her spinal anaesthetic. They said it was a simple procedure. That is already a red flag.

“In the course of the procedure you ruptured a vessel. You were coming out and going in without telling the parents who were outside the problem.”

He said if the hospital had told them exactly what happened before her daughter’s death, he would have called her sister and the husband to immediately activate an emergency process to save her life.

He said: “I am asking for justice. I don’t wish my enemy to go through what we are going through as a family. Full investigation must go into this case. It is now between the police and them.

“A legal autopsy must be carried out to determine the real cause of death.

“From the report of the autopsy we will seek legal redress. If it is established she died out of incompetence and sheer negligence, the law knows what to do with them.

“I lived most of my life overseas. I studied them. If we were overseas, first and foremost they would have sealed that hospital because every minute something similar will happen again.

“I want my own case to be the last. I will do everything to get justice. I want them to bring these people to book.”

Painfully, even Sekidika knows that justice will not bring her daughter back to life. Forever, the memories of her lovely daughter will continue to resonate in him. He will continue to imagine the pains she passed through before giving up as well as her unfulfilled dreams and aspirations.