

**METRO PLUS**

# Sick two-year-old attached to empty oxygen tank dies

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• Ikorodu General Hospital; Christopher Photos: File, family

## Afeez Hanafi

Parents of a two-year-old boy, Christopher Mike-Ozugha, say the carefree attitude of some medical workers at the Ikorodu General Hospital, Lagos State, allegedly led to the death of their only child.

The couple – Esther and Emmanuel Mike-Ozugha – said the child was taken to the hospital because he had difficulty in breathing.

They accused the hospital of placing him on oxygen for about 30 minutes, adding that the oxygen tank had run out of oxygen.

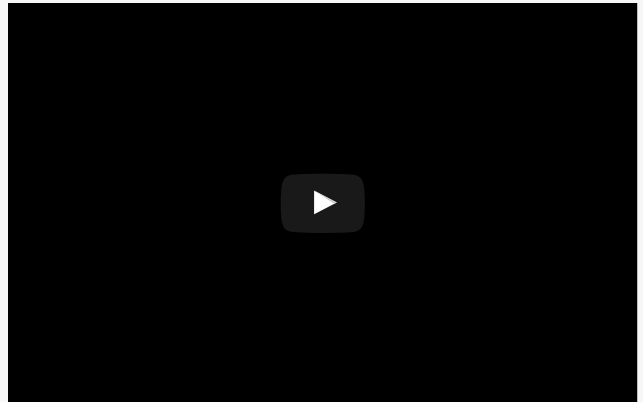
They said it was late by the time the oversight was discovered, as the victim eventually died.

But the general hospital said the child had severe *bronchopneumonia* and malaria, which killed him.

*PUNCH Metro* learnt that Christopher's mother had returned from work last Wednesday and found the boy, who was left in the care of her younger sister, running temperature.

She said she gave him paracetamol syrup and he became fine.

"When I was in the office on Thursday, my sister called me that Christopher was running temperature again. I rushed back home and took him to a midwife in Irawo, Ikorodu. She checked his temperature and gave him anti-malaria drugs, but there was no improvement.



"On Friday, we took him to Olive Clime Hospital and a doctor at the private hospital ran a test on him. He gave us paracetamol, antibiotics, and anti-malaria drugs. The test came out on Saturday evening and my baby's temperature was still high. The doctor said he did not have bacteria or infection and said he would continue with the anti-malaria treatment.

"That Saturday night, I noticed my child was dizzy, but the doctor said it was due to some medications he took. He said he would be fine."

Esther explained that the doctor told her and her husband around 11pm that their son's breathing was abnormal and referred him to the Gbagada General Hospital.

She said they took the boy to the Ikorodu General Hospital because the former was far.

She said, "He could walk and talk at that time. We got to the general hospital around 1am. They started complaining that why did we go to a private hospital and come to them when things were getting out of hands?"

"A doctor told one of the nurses to prepare oxygen for Christopher. The nurse said the oxygen tank they had was not working and that we should not disturb her.

“Later, another nurse came and I begged her. She followed me to the Accident and Emergency Ward, where we got an oxygen tank. After 30 minutes, the nurse came back to check and said there was no oxygen in the tank. She quickly connected him to the central oxygen.

“After some minutes, it started blinking and I rushed to call the first nurse. She said I should leave her alone. She told me to put it off and switch it on again. I did so and it started working again.

“After a while, my child started misbehaving. I ran back to her. She said I should leave her; she didn’t follow me.

“Later, the second nurse said the degree of the oxygen was low. By that time, my baby was no longer responding. Something was coming out of his mouth. I was sent out of the ward because I was panicky.”

The deceased’s father, Emmanuel, who corroborated his wife’s account, said their child died around 11am.

He said, “I am a Christian; I leave vengeance to God. Actually, it (the death) was due to the hospital’s negligence. They brought an oxygen tank without oxygen and put the pipes in his nose without connecting the other ends to the oxygen tank. When I waited for the nurse to fix it and she didn’t show up, I removed the pipes so that he could breathe normal air.

“To my greatest surprise, the doctor that came to examine him instead of fixing the fault, kicked the pipes away. He only touched the baby and left. A nurse said I was wasting the oxygen. She turned on the tank knob, but nothing came out. She said it was not working. She called a technician that brought it.”

Emmanuel said the technician opened the tank and oxygen started escaping.

He explained that the technician called the nurses to control the flow without getting any response, adding that the man left in anger after regulating the flow to a certain degree.

“I put the pipes back into his nose. The nurse that was on night duty came and discovered that there was no oxygen in the tank. She then connected him to the central oxygen till daybreak.

“They took him to the emergency ward and he was to be placed on the central oxygen, which was not coming out. They had to call for help to get it fixed, and that lasted for about 10 minutes. Before I knew it, my son’s chest had swollen. That was when I knew he was gone,” he added.

A senior official at the hospital, who did not want his name in print, said the patient was brought in a bad condition.

He described the allegation that the oxygen tank was faulty and short of oxygen as false, adding that investigation had commenced on the alleged nonchalant attitude of the first nurse.

He said, “The boy was diagnosed with severe bronchopneumonia and severe malaria. He had high fever and difficulty in breathing and was vomiting. When a doctor examined him, he was drowsy in a semi-unconscious state and treatment was commenced.

“For four days, the parents were going from home to the hospital. The patient was referred on the 5th day when his condition had deteriorated to the Gbagada Hospital, but the parents decided to bring him here.

“Ikorodu General Hospital does not charge for oxygen and it is always available in the hospital. In fact, oxygen was supplied on Saturday, August 19, and the patient came in early Sunday morning. So, there couldn’t be any issue of supply and it is not true that the oxygen tank was empty.

“We operate central oxygen that is available at every bed. In situations where beds or all the oxygen points have been occupied, we resort to oxygen concentrators, which are as good as the central oxygen.”

The Olive Clime doctor, Dr. Olumide Sam-Ayodele, who spoke with our correspondent on the telephone, said his hospital had no fault.

He said, “I picked up the symptoms of bronchopneumonia at the point when the child could be saved. To clear the record, the child was conscious when they left and his temperature had come down.

“Between the time of the referral and the time they got to the general hospital, anything could have happened. I called a cab driver to carry them so that they got to where they were going on time. I referred them to the Gbagada General Hospital initially because I

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with the referral.”

The Lagos State Commissioner for Health, Dr Jide Idris, in a reply to a text message sent to him, promised to investigate the case.

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