

Mother, National Hospital Abuja disagree over teenager's death

Published February 11, 2019



The late Paul Akpala

Oluwatosin Omojuyigbe

The family of Paul Akpala and the National Hospital Abuja are currently engaged in shifting the blame over the death of the 17-year-old.

The mother of the teenager, Judy Akpala, in a *Facebook*, post, blamed the medical team at the hospital for wrong diagnosis and treatment.

PUNCH Metro learnt that Paul was, on Wednesday, January 23, 2019, hit by a car in the Berger area of the Federal Capital Territory while trying to cross the expressway.

It was gathered that Paul, who had gone for an admission interview to a Canadian university, had called his mother to inform her of his success at the interview.

Judy noted in her post that when Paul failed to return home, search teams were mobilised and a case of a missing person was reported at police stations, adding that someone called the family on Thursday, January 24, 2019, that Paul was involved in an accident.

She wrote, “We rushed to the NHA and found him in the Traumatic Intensive Care Unit. He was put on a life support machine. The doctors and nurses told us that he was unconscious and they were waiting for him to come out of it. Junior (Paul) had some abrasions and his legs were bandaged.

“I went to the resuscitation room and saw a few prescriptions. There were CT scans, fast and X-ray requests. We asked if the scans had been done but were informed that the three CT scan machines in the hospital were not working and the X-ray machine in the TICU was also not working. For this reason, nothing had been done on my son.

“He was being pumped with antibiotics and was presumed to not have any internal injuries. The doctors and nurses gave us false hope. They said he was pretty stable. They told us there were no signs of internal injuries but they were treating him against any possible head injury since he lay unconscious.

“By Friday, January 25, 2019, we became increasingly worried about the fact that no scans had been done, so we began to make enquiries about how to get him to a facility that had those machines. We were informed that the scans could be done at the Lifebridge in Garki, Abuja.

“We told the hospital that we were making plans to move him to Lifebridge for the scans. They told us that the ventilator battery was weak and would not last the distance. We told them that we were willing to buy another battery for the hospital and they said we would require the management’s approval and that the battery would have to be imported from Germany.

“When we insisted that something needed to be done, they brought another ventilator machine that was leaking gas; they fixed it and we were able to move him to Lifebridge on Saturday, January 26, 2019.

“The tests and scans were done and revealed that my son did not have any head or spine injury; all the results were good; the brain was normal, no spinal cord injury, no heart injury, and the ribs were okay, but pulmonary fat embolism was detected.

“Lifebridge saw the emergency and was ready to perform surgery on him but the accompanying nurses from the NHA refused. They said agreeing to that could cost them their jobs and that he would be moved back to the NHA and the surgery would be performed immediately. When we got to the NHA, he was rolled into the theatre and less than 10 minutes later, Junior (Paul) died.”

Judy blamed the hospital for not having functional equipment, adding that had it been that the medical equipment was working, her son would have been diagnosed correctly.

She added, “Junior (Paul) was being treated for a head injury, which he did not have. They gave us false hope, assuring us that he would come out of the state of unconsciousness; he was fighting for his life; every second counted but the NHA did nothing in the hours that were most critical. The best quality of every single thing that was required of us was given to them yet, they never performed any test. We were the ones looking for solutions for their ineptitude.

“If the scan machines were working, the fat and blood accumulat in the lungs would have been discovered. The same surgery that they claimed to want to perform in his dying minutes could have been done and dusted a few hours after he got to the NHA. If all that needed to have been done was done within the first 24 hours, my son might not have died.”

However, the hospital claimed that it was not responsible for Paul's death, adding that it did the best it could under the circumstances.

In a statement by the hospital's Deputy Director, Information, Dr Tayo Haastrup, the NHA claimed that the ailment that Paul was diagnosed of after the scan did not require surgery.

He said, "The management of the National Hospital Abuja has reacted to the story of the late Paul Akpata, which wrongly accused the hospital of killing the patient.

"Paul Akpata was brought to the hospital after a road traffic accident on January 23, 2019, around 4.30pm. He was an obese man and registered as unknown patient, as he was unconscious at presentation at the Trauma Centre.

"He was promptly attended to by the trauma, orthopaedic and neurosurgical teams and was being managed for traumatic brain injury and bilateral lower limb fracture.

"He was unstable, given three units of blood and Clexane, and was admitted in the Intensive Care Unit and put on life support. His condition further deteriorated despite treatment.

"Although the CT scan machine is under repair in our facility, when it became necessary to have CT scan, the patient was moved to a diagnostic centre on ventilator, accompanied by two senior doctors and a nurse. The CT scan showed pulmonary fat embolism, which is a known complication of long bone fracture with attendant poor outcome. Pulmonary fat embolism does not require surgical operation; hence the patient was moved back to the Intensive Care Unit.

"We state unequivocally that the hospital did the best in the circumstance and we commiserate with the family of the deceased."