

Sick Enugu chef dies after allegedly rejecting surgery donation on faith grounds

Deji Lambo 12 January 2022

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Ogechukwu

Controversy has trailed the death of a chef, Ogechukwu, in Enugu State.

She was said to have died after battling ailments her friends identified as neurofibromatosis and spinal tumour.

The woman had reportedly been sick for over 10 months.

Her death, however, became public knowledge following an online outburst by one of her distraught friends, Can Mbanefo.

The aggrieved friend explained that when Ogechukwu's health was deteriorating, an appeal was made and N200,000 raised for a minor surgery at the 82 Division Military Hospital in Enugu State, which was done.

According to Mbanefo, the surgery was to drain an abscess to prepare her for the main surgery that would cost about N4m.

Mbanefo said efforts were on to raise funds for the second surgery at the Memfys Hospital, when a Catholic community based in Italy took interest in Ogechukwu's condition and raised money for the operation.

However, when representatives of the Catholic community contacted Ogechukwu, whose phone number was attached to the widely-circulated message appealing for funds online, Mbanefo claimed that she declined the offer on the grounds of her faith.

"Oge told them it was against her Jehovah Witness faith to collect money from Catholic Church," he wrote on Facebook.

The friend explained that he called Ogechukwu and she confirmed that she rejected the offer, adding that efforts to convince her to accept the offer proved abortive.

He stated, *"To cut the long story short, when one of the guys from Italy called her again, she still rejected the offer from the Catholic community.*

"She then told the brother that he could send his personal money to her instead of sending the donation from the church. Eventually, out of pity and for the sake of humanity, the brother sent something to her from his personal account.

"Meanwhile, it was Oge who chatted me and asked if I could link her up with any NGO. But when NGO came, her Jehovah Witness teachings could not allow her notice them."

Following Ogechukwu's death on Monday, January 10, 2022, Mbanefo, who was enraged about the development, made the post on his page.

Pictures of the deceased on her sickbed was attached to the post. Our correspondent observed that she looked frail in the pictures.

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Mixed reactions, however, greeted Mbanefo's account of the events preceding the chef's death.

While some people expressed disappointment at her reason for rejecting the offer that they said might save her life, others, particularly her relatives, denied the report that she died due to her religious belief.

One Chizoba Okafor, who claimed to be the deceased's cousin, stated that Ogechukwu's condition worsened after she received treatment for the wrong diagnosis.

He added, *"Jehovah's witnesses did not kill my sister, plzzz dis is not d time to throw insult on her biko cos going Tru all ur comments it hurts like hell.*

"D person dat started dis post forgot to mention dat wen she became sick d hospital dat started treating her was giving her tubaculoses drugs which was way off from wat was wrong wit her.

"Even wen my mum who worked in d hospital asked d doctor he was not even completely sure of d test dat was run on her and he went ahead to administer tuberculosis drugs on her and those drugs made more damage."

The deceased's sister, Amaka, who spoke to our correspondent on Tuesday, also refuted Mbanefo's claim.

She said, "That was not what happened; I know she had been receiving money from people throughout when she was in the hospital. She slimmed down a lot and the doctors said they could not operate on her unless she gained weight.

"She was always in constant pain and was battling a lot of things. She had a spinal cord injury and her lipid shifted from the waist. She had her first operation on December 25, at 81 Division Military Hospital.

"Why she didn't have the major operation was because she slimmed down a lot; we were trying for her to gain weight before this thing happened yesterday."

Regarding the offer her sister reportedly rejected, Amaka said, "I am not aware of that. Nothing like that happened."

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