

Manpower shortage in Ogun hospital sends patients to early grave

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Patients waiting to be attended to at the hospital

By Olamide Famuwagun

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OLAMIDE FAMUWAGUN writes on how residents of the Ogun Waterside Local Government Area suffer the loss of loved ones due to the lack of manpower in Ibiade General Hospital, a facility expected to serve the entire council

What could have been a day of joy for 46-year-old Sodiq Barihu ended in tears as he lost his wife and firstborn to the cold hands of death.

With a sigh on his lips, dejection in his tone, Barihu would have never guessed that he would incur two losses in a day.

On August 15, 2022, the businessman had excitedly taken his pregnant wife, Stella to the Ibiade General Hospital but there had been no doctor around to attend to her.

While narrating the incident to our correspondent, Sodiq said his wife bled to death for the absence of quick response time.

He said, “My wife usually goes for antenatal at a government-approved maternity centre, Agbure but on that day she couldn’t go there because the maternity centre had not opened. I immediately rushed her to the Ibiade General Hospital relieved that she would deliver successfully there, however, there was no doctor around.

“They didn’t even admit us. One of the nurses there just referred us to Ijebu Ode. At that time, the baby was already out but my wife was bleeding. On our way to Ijebu General Hospital, I lost my baby and my wife.”

Barihu noted that the loss had made him unable to think of anything else, adding that the deaths caused issues for him with his deceased wife’s family.

He said, “The two doctors we have are coming from Ijebu Ode, they’re not coming from Ogun Waterside which makes it very difficult to respond to emergencies. These doctors don’t come regularly as well. The case passed through the Ogbere Area Command. The loss did not make me think of any other thing, there have been many issues between me and my wife’s family because of this. She wasn’t sick, it’s because the doctor wasn’t around.”

The 46-year-old urged the government to provide more hands in the hospital to prevent cases such as his.

He said, “I urge the government to please provide qualified doctors that can be at Waterside permanently and not one who is part-time. To do this, they need more hands so that when there are cases that are critical such as this, they will be able to give quick response time.”

A council’s agony

The Ogun Waterside Local Government Area is located in Abigi town, Ogun State which is the only area on the Bight of Benin. It is mostly occupied by the Ijebus, Ilajes, and Ikales.

With a population of 126,200, the council is bounded in the West by Ijebu East Local Government, in the North and the East by Ondo State, and in the South by Lagos State and the Atlantic Ocean.

This local government occupies Southwest Ogun State and shares a boundary with Ijebu East Local Government Area. There are several villages in this local council development area.

The towns and villages in the LGA include Abigi, Agbede, Agbure, Agerige, Agilla, Agodo, Aiyede, Aiyesan, Ajegunle, Apata, Araromi Odo, Araromi Oke, Arokola, Ayetunmara, Bolorun Duro, Efire, Gbagi, Ibiade, Ibu, Igbafo, Ijebu Manuwa, Ilusin, Isekun, Ita Ogun, Ita Out, Itabaiye Itatufolu, Italugade, Itebu, Kesumeta, Leren, Logbosere, Logede, Lokula, Lomiro, Lukugbe, Makun, Moba, Oka, Okakota, Ologbu, Oruiye, Ranger, Sunbare, Tagbu Nrin, Tayoku, Tibada, Tigara, Tilagbe, Toga, Togunren, Toso, Urhobo, Yemoje, Zion, Iteju Elero, Lofoluwa, Logbosere, Momiro, More, Okebi, Ajegunle, Araromi, Araromi Obu, Arijan, Ayede, Ayila, Batedo, Edunola Igodankuda, Gbaragada Ibu, Idobilayo, Igbo Ala, Ijako, Ipakemore, Ajelanwa, Alo, Demolu, Ebute Oni, Idata Akila, Igele, Imeki, Itomosafeso, Iwopin, Lumuganran, Molofe, Molopope, Ologbun Orita, Omo, Olojumeta, Oni Shalu, Oribu, Oriegbe, Oriyanrin, Sumoge, Aba, Aba Olori, Abusoro, Agbala Irokun, Ago Ariye, Ajimo, Akede II, Awodikora Iganla, Awodikora Osa, Awodikora Seafu, Eba Igboedu, Ebute Okun, Ibodu, Igbo Edun, Irokun, Ito Aro, Itomowa-I Tolabase, Liyewu, Makun Omi, Mofere, Moha, Mosefejo, Obimilehin, Ode Omi, Okun Akede, Okun Awodikora, Okun Elufon., Okun Igbosere, Okun Ilete, Olokun Olosumeta.

The Ibiade General Hospital is a public hospital located at Tosho Street, Ibiade, Ogun Waterside, Ogun Waterside Local Government, Ogun State. It was established on May 18, 1960.

The general hospital is a licensed hospital by the Nigeria Ministry of Health.

On our correspondent's visit to the hospital, she observed that the hospital which was formally dilapidated had been refurbished in some parts while some areas remained bushy.

Only one doctor and three nurses were observed to be on duty while many patients were seen scattered around the hospital awaiting their turn to be treated.

A particular health worker was observed to be a helter-skelter because the shortage of workers had required him to take up many roles at once.

Many patients were also sighted lingering around the hospital premises with despondent looks on their faces, waiting to be attended to.

Our correspondent gathered that the general hospital was the only hospital in the council and is supposed to serve the entire LGA and its environs.

It was learnt that the doctors did not reside in the community but in Ijebu Ode which makes it even more difficult to meet up with medical emergencies as the journey from Ibiade where the hospital is located to Ijebu Ode is 1hr 19 minutes (80.5km).

So, the question lingers, can two doctors and three nurses suffice to cater to the medical emergencies of an entire LGA?

More woes, lamentations

With a vacant expression and a solemn look, a man recounts how his brother, Rasaq Shittu died.

Rasaq had suddenly developed hypertension in October 2022 and was rushed to the Ibiade General Hospital but there were no doctors to attend to him.

His brother said, “My brother is a welder, he works in the evening, around 7 pm. That day, we suddenly had to rush him to the hospital because he was suddenly unresponsive. We quickly rushed him to the Ibiade General Hospital but there were no doctors available. He was on oxygen when the nurse referred us to the Ijebu Ode General Hospital and we had to quickly take him there. On our way, my brother gave up.

“Although the matron of the hospital had attended to us well, if the doctors were around and he had gotten a quick medical response, my brother would have likely survived. The truth is that we need more doctors to prevent things like this.”

Other than the lack of manpower, our correspondent learnt that some residents of the LGA had lost their lives as a result of travelling for a long distance, sometimes by waterways to get to the Ibiade General Hospital.

In July 2019, Tayo Adeoti was about to give birth and was in pain, however, the traditional doctors in the area could not help her out of her situation at the time. Tayo had to be rushed to the Ibiade General hospital, which was a three-hour journey from Ode-Omi, where she resided and unfortunately, Tayo died on the way.

Her husband, Bashir lamented the lack of well-equipped health centres to attend to medical emergencies.

He said,” My wife and child would still be alive if we had good health facilities and enough medical practitioners. We need to travel over water to bigger towns to get better healthcare.”

While at the Ibiade General hospital, an elderly man, Gbenga Osikale, who had come for his checkup, approached our correspondent and lamented the lack of manpower in the hospital.

He said, “This hospital has been existing for a long time but the workers are not enough. We need more doctors and nurses because if there are no doctors and nurses, there will be no one to treat the patients when they are brought here.

“We plead with the government to please give us enough doctors and nurses. When you go to the Abigi Medical Centre, there are more workers than here and it’s not supposed to be so because this is a general hospital. We have tendered a lot of complaints but we are yet to see anything done.”

Osikale pointed at the many patients waiting outside to see the doctor, saying “Look at this now, many people are waiting.”

Our correspondent had approached the doctor present at the hospital and pressed for a comment on the matter but the doctor refused to comment.

A businessman in the Ibiade community, Salami Misibau, stated that the lack of manpower and quick response time had made many of the community residents especially pregnant women consult traditional/herbal doctors which were killing many of them.

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He said, “We have complained severally to the government but there’s still nothing, because of this issue, many of our people visit Ile Alagbo (place of herbal medicine) but this has led to the death of some of our pregnant women.

“This is a town that has everything, we have a police post and over 10 private schools but it’s appalling that our only General Hospital lacks doctors. We need a doctor to live here so that the response time is faster and more effective.

“When there are critical issues, these patients are being referred to Ijebu Ode general hospital, and it’s laughable because our hospital here is even bigger than that of Ijebu Ode. We have a shortage of doctors. Normally when a patient is taken to the hospital, regardless of the hour, there is supposed to be a doctor on the ground but this is not so here. Even nurses cannot carry out any operation without a doctor.

TABLE 9

**DISTRIBUTION OF DOCTORS IN STATE AND LGA OWNED MEDICAL INSTITUTION:
CLASSIFIED BY SPECIALTY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, 2017**

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	GENERAL PRACTICE	GENERAL SURGERY	PAEDIATRICS	OPHTHALMOLOGY	ENT-SPEECH	OBSTETRIC	GYNAECOLOGY	PHYSICIAN	GENERAL DENT	ORTHODONTIC	DIETITIAN	TOTAL
AGBOKUTA NORTH	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
AGBOKUTA SOUTH	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	14	1	0	19
AKO-AKODONA	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	11	1	1	17
IKIN-GBO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IKO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	6
IKO EAST	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
IKO NORTH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
IKO NORTH-EAST	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IKO ODE	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	24	1	0	28
IKO WEST	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
IKOGUNFON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
IPATA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4
ISAKUNA/DAVON	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
ISERA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
ISOGBOLE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ISUN-WAYUNADE	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
IKO NORTH	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
IKO WEST	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
IKO NORTH	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
IKO SOUTH	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	11	1	1	14
TOTAL	14	10	0	4	2	10	0	2	145	4	2	175

“If anything happens at midnight today before the doctor says he’s coming from Ijebu Ode to see the patient, something must have happened to the patient. In the same way, if a patient is directly transferred to Ijebu Ode for treatment, no matter how fast the car is, more than an hour will still be spent on the road. The person could die within this period.

“We need doctors. Right now, we have just two doctors. They come and go. The junior doctor comes on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday while the senior doctor comes only on Tuesday. What we need at the least, is for a doctor to sleep or rest, as they come on those days.

“The senior doctor who did an operation last Thursday only came by luck. That day there were two operations pending and at that time the senior doctor was just coming back from Ondo state when he decided to stop by the hospital, it was by stopping by that he was able to perform the two surgeries.

“If he didn’t stop by, they would have had to call the junior doctor from Ijebu Ode to come for the surgery and who knows what would have happened within that time. The junior doctor lives in Ijebu Ode.”

A resident of Iwopin, Ahmed Owoseni noted that the hospital was not functioning well despite the renovations of government, adding that many had lost their lives because of this.

Efforts by our correspondent to speak to the Hospitals Chief Medical Director, Dr. Oluwatosin Durojaye proved abortive as he was not around the day our correspondent visited the hospital and the staff of the hospital had refused to give his contact to our correspondent.

Worrying healthcare statistics

A paper by Babatunde Jimoh and Oluwafemi Tinuola titled ‘An Assessment of Factors Influencing Job Satisfaction of Healthcare Professionals in Ogun State Hospitals, Nigeria’ revealed that the migration of healthcare professionals from the Ogun State Hospital Management Board to Tertiary Hospitals owned by the Federal Government within the State has become worrisome.

The paper partly read, “The migration of healthcare professionals from the Ogun State Hospital Management Board to Tertiary Hospitals owned by the Federal Government within the State has become worrisome. Surveys have shown that the number of healthcare professionals employed by the State’s HMB would decline by half within a year of their employment due to seeking greener pastures elsewhere.

“This has led to progressive staff attrition with resulting work overload and stress for the healthcare professionals left in the service that cannot efficiently and effectively deliver quality healthcare service to the populace. In addition, patients visiting the hospital on delay in accessing services have made several complaints, as they have to wait for long hours, cope with the attitude of overstretched healthcare professionals, lack of doctors on site, and many more, which could be attributed to acute shortage of human resources.”

According to the research, the Ogun State Hospital Management Board has under it five State Hospitals, five Dental Centres, four Community Mental Health Centres, and twenty-five General Hospitals with a total of 39 health facilities.

The Ogun state Medical and Health Statistics (2017) revealed only one general duty doctor with no other doctors for other specialisation at the Ibiade General Hospital.

Community leaders, experts speak

Commenting on the issue, the Alarige of Ibiade, Oba Bola Raimi, stated that the matter had been reported to the health board at Abeokuta but nothing had been done to placate the sufferings of the community residents.

He said, “This is a general hospital serving the entire Waterside, although, we have some health centres, there’s one at Abigi, another at Iwopin, and others, we have about three or four clinics and health centres however this is our current issue is the shortage of manpower at the General hospital.

“We have been reporting this matter to the health board at Abeokuta but nothing has been done. I reiterate that we need new hands, there’s a shortage of nurses also. The hospital has been repaired but there are so many things that need to be put in. We currently have two doctors there. One is currently on leave while the other is on the ground. We need more manpower, staff and more equipment.

Oba Raimi disclosed to our correspondent that one of the doctors was currently on leave while the other was attending a conference in Lagos state.

He said, “The doctors rotate every day in the week, presently one is on his annual leave. At times, the doctors are present and at times they’re absent. Since one is currently on leave, the second one is attending a conference in Lagos, so they’ve not been around since Wednesday. We need more manpower. There is a lot of medical equipment that is still needed in the hospital. The building is well constructed but these are the things we lack.”

The Chairman of the council, Mr. Adekunle Mudashiru, when contacted by our correspondent said he was not aware of the deaths that had occurred due to the hospital’s lack of manpower but the state government had done its best to renovate the hospital.

He said, “I am not aware of these deaths. This is the first time I am hearing about them however, I commiserate with those who have lost loved ones. That General Hospital had been abandoned for so many years but it was the regime of Governor Dapo Abiodun that came to the rescue of the hospital in terms of renovation and other things including the quarters of the doctors and the nurses.

“They have these quarters which they’re supposed to be living in so they don’t have to come from anywhere far.”

In his view, a medical practitioner, Dr. Adetayo Johnson of Caring Trust Medical Centre, stated that having enough doctors was crucial in saving the lives of patients.

He said, “What it takes to run a hospital has to be well specified and thorough because a hospital takes care of the lives of people. We have mobile emergency doctors who attend to patients in emergency, they are called mobile rescue units and they require a well-trained doctor on ground, especially cardiologists. Those are the ones who can sustain the breathing of the patients for a while. There is also a need for an emergency surgeon or a neurosurgeon.

“Doctors are never enough. No matter how you try, even if you employ 5,000 doctors in a hospital, they are never enough. This is because the problems of the patients surpass the doctors on the ground so the doctors need to be many. We have emergency doctors, casualty doctors, professional doctors, registrars, consultants, medical officers, and HO (House officers).”

Johnson noted that the country lacked the financial resources to cater to doctors and keep them efficient.

He said, “In Nigeria here, what we lack isn’t manpower but financial resources, the resources for us to get doctors. Doctors are not employed in Nigeria, when a doctor is looking for a job here, he has to sacrifice his life to look for that job. With the modus operandi here, in most cases the jobs aren’t being specified to the doctor, they want the doctor to cover the morning shift, afternoon shift, and night shifts.

“These doctors are human beings and not machines. It is unprofessional to assign such tedious jobs to a doctor, especially for just a meager salary. Also, appropriate accommodation is not provided and majority of the hospitals don’t have residential apartments inside the hospitals for the doctors. They have these quarters away from the hospital and this will keep affecting the efficiency of the doctors.”

Govt reacts

The state Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Abdulwaheed Odusile, stated that the state had upgraded its health facilities and plans to have 236 wards in the state as part of its plans to prioritise health in the state.

He said, “It is quite unfortunate what you have just told me but I am not aware of it. I’ll tell my colleagues in the ministry of health to look into the matter. However, I can tell you that we have more nurses and doctors all over the state, including our primary health centres. We are trying to provide health services to our people in all our health facilities around the state.

“We are upgrading most of our hospitals, the primary and secondary health givers. There’s no way you can have 99 per cent personnel but we have recruited more health personnel in this administration than in the previous government. We are improving our hospitals by providing staff, drugs, and facilities. We plan to have about 236 wards in the state, we have over 100 now and we’re moving towards the target. These will not just be buildings but they will also be equipped with personnel, drugs, and other facilities. It’s a work in progress, we can’t achieve it overnight. These are the things left undone by the previous administration but this present administration of Governor Dapo Abiodun has given more health facilities to our people.

When contacted, the state Permanent Secretary, Ogun State Hospitals Management Board, Dr Nafiu Aigoro, assured our correspondent that all hands would be on deck to solve the ongoing issue, adding that the current brain drain had caused a shortage of medical staff all over the world.

He said, “Hands are on deck to find those supposed to be on duty to carry out the necessary sanctions. Recently, the state government refurbished the hospital and there are available staff quarters for the doctors and nurses to stay.

“It’s no news that there is brain drain not only in Nigeria but the world generally. Every day, we have our health workers resign and we can’t hold them back. We have to make use of what we have.

“However, the government would be unhappy about the referral of patients to the Ijebu Ode General Hospitals because of the absence of doctors, because one of the visions of the state is to reduce the mortality rate in the state. I assure you that now that the report has gone to the headquarters, we’ll work on it.”

All efforts to speak to the state Commissioner of Health, Tomi Coker, proved abortive as she did not respond to calls and messages sent by our correspondent.

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