

Sister to Air Force officer bitten to death by snake explains how deceased died Doctors' negligence led to Bercy's death

...They were busy surfing the internet before giving her expired drugs

► Late officer's family, in-laws on warpath over burial site

FROM OKWE OBI, ABUJA

OGAH Jane Uga, an elder sister to the late Lance Corporal Bercy Ogah Ichiko, who was bitten to death by a snake at her residence, has spoken to *Saturday Sun* on what led to her sister's demise.

Uga, 37, a stylist based in Kwankwashe, Madalla, Niger State, claimed that the negligence and lack of professionalism on the part of the medical personnel who attended to the deceased facilitated the death of her sister. She accused the doctors of busy surfing the internet to proscribe drugs for the officer of the Nigerian Air Force.

According to the indigene of Ibilla, Igede-Ega Okileme, in Oju Local Government of Benue State, the drugs that were given to her sister had expired, adding that even when the husband stormed the hospital and requested to take her to another hospital for treatment, they declined, claiming they had no power to release her.

The bereaved woman noted that her family and her in-laws are currently at loggerheads over where to bury the 31-year-old mother of one. While the late officer's family wants her body buried in Benue State as part of their customs, the widower is insisting that her remains should be buried either in the Federal Capital Territory or in his home state of Akwa Ibom.

My sister and I

My name is Jane Ogah. I am married. We are seven in my family, and I am the third child. The late Bercy was my younger sister, in fact, the last child of our parents. She was married and had a baby girl who is about one year and seven months old.

And speaking about our parents, our mum is late, but our father is alive. He lives in Benue State.

What actually happened

On Friday November 19, in the morning, my sister had prepared for work. It's like she had a running stomach and she went to the toilet. Even her house help went to that same toilet. It was after her house help left that she went to the toilet. It was then that the snake came out from the water closet and bit her.

Was I with her when it happened? No. But that was what I was told. Neighbours who were around told us. Before we knew it was around 1:30pm. The mortuary attendant called us. Before then, she had died. She (my sister) drove herself to the hospital. We learnt that she was shouting

and pleading with the doctors to help her. She was shouting that 'you people are not attending to me o. If I die I won't forgive you, o'. She was also calling her husband. The husband even had to hire a cab so as to reach the hospital on time. On his way to the hospital, the telephone conversation with his wife went off. He could not hear from my sister (his wife) again. When he got there, my sister could not talk. He touched her and noticed that she was still warm. He was pleading with the medical personnel to release his wife to enable him take her to another hospital for treatment.

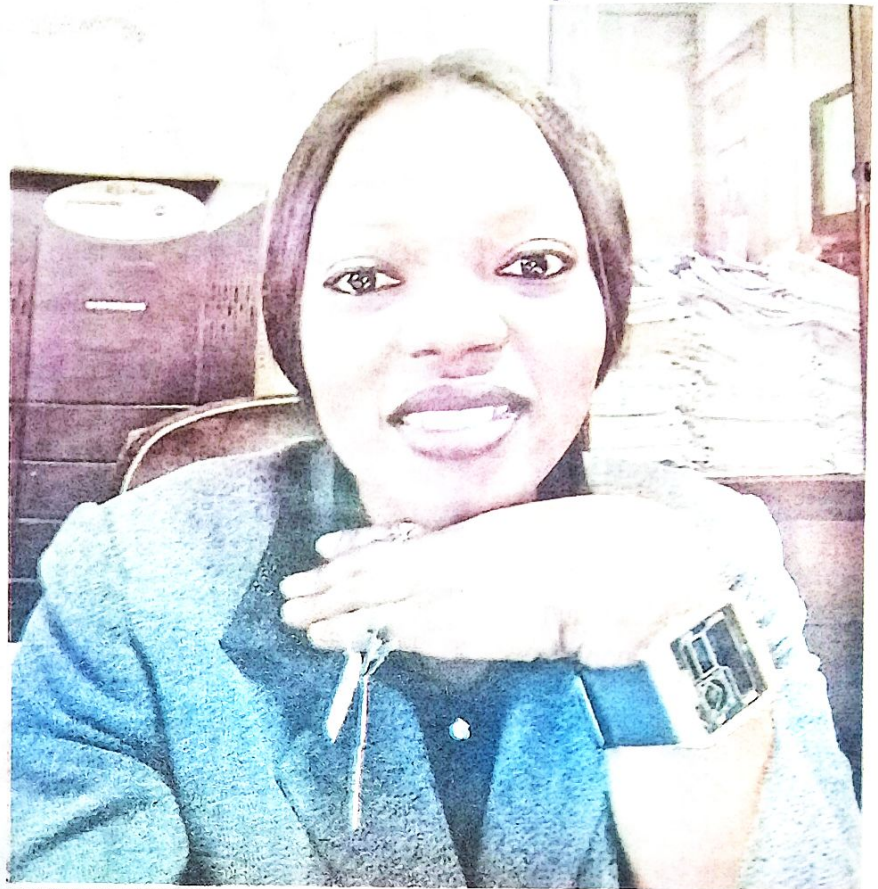
They refused. Rather, they were citing different instances where Air Force personnel died because they were taken outside of their hospital and that they would not release her. He kept on shouting, but they refused. Even the drugs that the medical personnel brought had expired three months ago. But they had to give her the medicine. Instead for the doctor to attend to her, they were busy with their phones, browsing before they could treat her. And she kept on insisting that if she should die she would not forgive them. That was the last thing she said before she died. And my sister was a good woman. She had no problem with anybody. She got married in 2019.

Why I believe the snake that killed her was sent to her mysteriously

On Saturday, that is a day after the incident, one of our cousins had to send a video to us from Jos, Plateau State capital that they have found the snake. But when the incident happened on Friday, Air Force personnel were deployed to go to her apartment and break the septic tank. They did not see anything. It was on Saturday that one of her bosses had to invite snake charmers from Zaria, Kaduna State. The charmers had to command the snake to come out and it crawled out of the water closet (WC). They conjured and asked the snake to identify itself, and the snake said it was sent to kill her. After everything, they killed and burnt the snake.

My sister's corpse is still in the mortuary

What we want the Nigerian Air Force to do for the family? What we want is to take her corpse to Benue State, although she got married to a man from Akwa Ibom.



BERCY BEFORE HER DEATH

We want the Nigerian Air Force to release the body to us

Yes. We want them to release the body to us. We went there on Monday. The personnel had to call the husband for us to make arrangements. They asked us separately if that was what we both wanted. After that, they brought us together and asked us how we would want the burial to be. The husband wants to bury her here in Abuja at the Air Force cemetery, but we want to take her home. Where I come from (Benue State), we do not allow our corpse to be buried outside; we bring it back home. When we laid the complain to her boss, he asked us who it was that told us she would be buried there.

We said the husband. They called the husband and spoke to him. He finally agreed that we should bury her in Idoma. Later, the father of the husband said he would not agree, arguing that since his family paid my sister's pride price, he would not accept for her to be buried in our place. He is insisting that she should be buried in Abuja, not even Akwa Ibom. But we do not like that, no matter the situation. Even if there is no money, we would have to go to the village and tax people so as to take the corpse home. But the husband has gone home to see his father. The Air Force said we should agree and fix a date, before they would know what to do.

How did I feel when I heard the news? I felt bad.



BERCY



DECEASED'S SISTER: JANE

People saying it didn't happen

I don't know those saying it didn't happen. It happened. She is my younger sister. I brought her from the village when she was 10 years old and the same time we lost our mother. She was our last born. It was even on Thursday that she was discussing how our mother left us early and that she would not leave her daughter early in life. And, just a week after, she died. She even lived with me and with my elder sister before she got married.

When she joined the Nigerian Air Force? She joined in 2016. After her training, she was posted to Maiduguri. After about two years, she was posted to Abuja.

What we want from Nigeria Air

Force

What do we want the Nigerian Air Force to do for the family in terms of compensation?

If there is any way they can compensate us like giving me a job, I will be happy.

Where the child is now

She is with the father. She is not used to us. My main problem is the baby girl. We want to collect the girl. She is just a year plus. If they take her away, she might not remember us again. The father does not want the girl to know her mother's people. Already, the relationship between us and the father is not cordial. We are not quarrelling but there is a kind of disrespect on his part. He does not respect his wife's family. He doesn't visit us.