

Five dead, eight hospitalised after drinking local gin

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Five people died and eight others were hospitalized at the Umunakara, Imerienwe community in Ngor-Okpala Council Area of Imo State, after drinking local gin commonly known as Kai-Kai.

Eyewitnesses accounts claimed that the incident occurred after some people, who patronized the local gin shop, beginning from November 14 to 17, started experiencing stiffness of the body, partial blindness and eventual death.

It was gathered that the shop owner, Mr. Uwadiogwu Eze, on noticing that consumers of his product were falling ill and dropping dead, fled the community.

There were initial speculations that Uwadiogwu submitted himself to the Umeneké Police Station, but the vigilante security chief of Imerienwe community, Mr. Promise, disclosed that there was a man-

hunt for the shop owner over the deadly gin.

The Imo State Ministry of Health has since sent a team to the community, headed by its Director for Public Health, who doubles as the Director of the Ministry's Centre for Disease Control, Dr. Okeji A.C.

Residents of the Umunakara community, headed by its Chairman Mr. Livinus Igbo, said that the deceased started experiencing headaches, abdominal discomforts, and blindness and eventually died.

Upon sighting the medical emergency ambulance of the State Ministry of Health, several youths in the community and other adjoining villages, who drank the local gin queued up for medical attention.

The youths complained of experiencing one symptom or the other, but Okeji said it might be impossible to take every one who drank the gin back to the state specialist hospital.

He, however, made arrangements with the Head Nurse of the Umunakara Primary Health Centre to be a first responder to any new case that might arise before the Ministry's arrival at no costs to the victim.

Four victims, whose symptoms seemed to be worsening, were however, taken back to Owerri for further checks. Meanwhile, eight other victims were, on Saturday, rushed to a private clinic in Owerri.

The Chief Medical Consultant of one of the clinics, Dr. Ezimefula Andrew, revealed that of the eight victims transferred from St Augustine's Hospital Ulakwo, one of them was already totally blind, while the others were showing symptoms of various stages of methanol poisoning.

The deceased have been identified as Daniel Nwosu Jnr, 45, Friday Osuji, 70, Ifeanyi Njoku, 31, Benjamin Okoroafor and Madam Adanna Iheanacho, 60.