

# Crime

Taiwo Jimoh

**A**grieving father, Mr. Bashiru Wahab, has narrated how he lost his four-year-old son, Bashiru Kehinde, to what he described as "incompetence on the part of health workers."

Wahab, a car dealer, said that Kehinde, who was in Nursery Two, died of stomach complications at the Federal Medical Centre, Ebute-Metta.

The man, in an emotion-laden voice said he decided to share his experience in order to get justice for his late son and prevent a repeat of such a costly mistake on another person.

According to him, Kehinde's journey to death started on December 3, 2021, after he complained of a stomach problem.

His words: "He was vomiting heavily, crying and saying he felt a lot of pain. As parents, my wife and I couldn't watch him writhing in pain. We drove quickly to a nearby primary healthcare centre, Ipinerere Health Center in the Alimosho area of the state. On arrival, we met a couple of administrative staff, but no doctor was available to attend to our son despite that the case was an emergency and my son was vomiting seriously, coupled with the pains he was experiencing.

"One of them referred us to General Hospital, Orile, Agege. By then, my son was looking pale and helpless. We rushed to Orile Agege and he was admitted. We were told to buy injections, drips and some other medical items, which we did. We also did a blood test, and he passed some drips but there was no improvement. We were told that a doctor was coming to do a checkup on him very early the following day, and also to give us a report. Unfortunately, the doctor did not arrive until 5 pm and the report was given to us about 7 pm. The doctor also referred us to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH), Ikeja."

Wahab said that it was getting late by that time, and Kehinde was defecating, vomiting and screaming.

"My wife asked the staff if their ambulance could be used to convey him to the hospital. They said it would cost us N5,000, but the price had probably increased now to N7,000. I was upset and asked myself, 'do we need to pay for the services of an ambulance during an emergency?' I carried my son and beckoned to my wife to leave the hospital. We rushed back to my car and put him in the back seat," Wahab narrated.

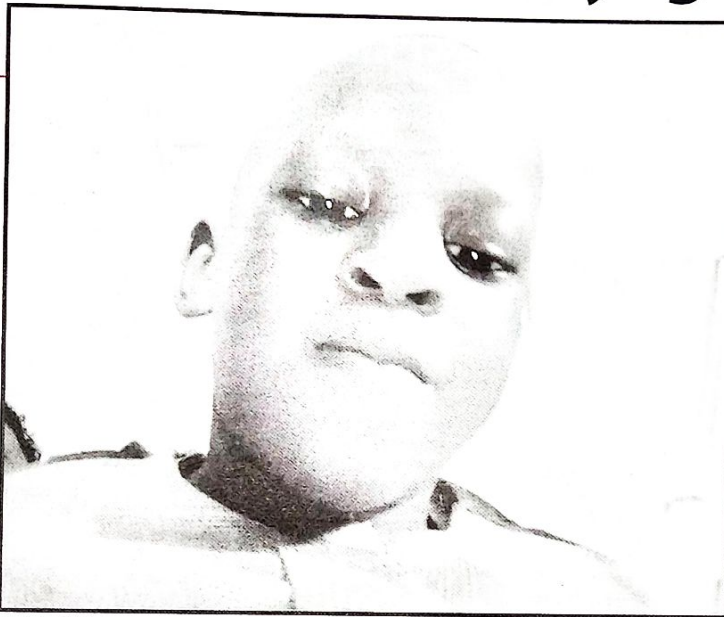
He recalled that by this time his wife was crying as she continued to notice that Kehinde's condition was worsening. The distressed couple and their son got to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH) about 11 pm and Wahab stated that it took over an hour to get the attention of medical workers at the hospital.

He said: "At that critical time, we were forced to register and pay for a card. After wasting time to get the card, we were then told there was no bed space after which we were referred to the Federal Medical Center (FMC), Ebute-Metta and it was midnight. One of them told us that our boy was in a critical condition and they couldn't admit us without a bed.

"If you are familiar with Lagos, you'll know how unsafe some areas have been lately. However, we summoned courage and drove to FMC. On arrival at FMC, they were quick to respond to us, but told us that we needed to see a specialist. According to them, the referral note from the previous hospital claimed that our boy had stomach troubles and we needed a pediatrician. About 20 minutes later, a surgeon, Dr. Fakunle arrived. He was kind and proactive by requesting an x-ray and some medical items which we provided.

"The result revealed that our boy had an in-

## My son died over health workers' incompetence, says grieving dad



The late Kehinde

testinal obstruction. He said that we could have lost him if another minute was wasted. He attended to our son immediately and passed a tube through his nose to the belly, to clear the obstruction. After this, he assured us that our boy would be fine and the treatment confirmed this."

Wahab further recalled that Dr. Fakunle later left and handed them over to a young male nurse called Obafemi. He described Obafemi as "looking unkempt, appeared nonchalant and distracted."

He also recollected that when he asked Obafemi the type of medication he was to give Kehinde, he had looked at him like he was crazy for asking such a question and then refused to respond. Wahab said that as Obafemi was installing the drip, he was distracted and this made him to become worried.

He noted: "In less than five minutes, Kehinde began to scream and shake aggressively. I knew something was wrong. I ran out of the ward screaming, calling for help. At this juncture, I found Obafemi in the lobby chatting with one of the cleaners. I approached him to have a look at Kehinde and to help us to find Dr. Fakunle, but he ignored me. I repeatedly pleaded with him, but he stayed glued to his phone.

"My wife then came out screaming, saying that Kehinde was dying. She knelt on the floor, begging the nurse to come and check on our son. That was when he responded that the doctor had left, and that Kehinde was shaking because the drip was supplying him energy. I asked my wife to return to the ward and stay with our son while I sort things out. I was making a scene at this point, requesting to



Wahab

see any available matron or doctor but no one responded.

"They kept saying Kehinde would be fine. After creating a scene, a nurse volunteered to check, but only to discover that Kehinde had died in his mom's arms. Obafemi started to apologise, saying he was sorry for ignoring me. I screamed and cursed."

The grieving father said that his screams and curses drew the attention of a matron, who came out alongside a man that claimed to be the Public Relations Officer of the hospital and both pleaded with Wahab.

"Kehinde and his twin brother would have turned five in a couple months but he is gone to be with his creator. I'm helpless and want justice because Kehinde did not deserve to die. Why was Kehinde left in the hands of an incapable

nurse? Wahab queried.

Reacting to the allegations levelled against the hospital, Assistant Director, Corporate Services, Dr. Olorunfemi Ayoola, said the hospital commiserates with Wahab and his family on the loss of their beloved son. He stated that Kehinde was presented to the emergency room of FMC Ebute-Metta at 3.30 am on December 5, 2021.

His words: "The complaints made by the parents suggested that the child had been sick for about six days before presentation at FMC Ebute-Metta in a very grievous state and symptoms were suggestive of a complicated surgical abdomen. Unfortunately, his parents had called an auxiliary nurse to initially treat the boy at home, and after two days of this sub-standard care by an unskilled person lacking appropriate training, then embarked on the unfortunate sojourn presenting at Alimosho Health Centre, where he was referred to Ile-Epo General Hospital and was managed for two days without resolution of symptoms, and was referred to Lagos State University Teaching Hospital (LASUTH).

"Kehinde got prompt attention upon arrival. He was resuscitated, placed on intravenous fluids-drip-intravenous antibiotics, and a nasogastric tube was passed. Prompt investigations were conducted to assist the managing doctors to confirm their suspected diagnosis. Within three hours of his arrival, all investigations had been conducted and reviewed and a diagnosis achieved and surgery was delayed only because of the very poor state of the patient.

"On review of the results, including an abdominal x-ray, it was confirmed that he had a severe complicated surgical abdomen. Diagnosis withheld to respect patient's confidentiality. The parents were informed, and preparation for surgery was made including arrangements for blood in case transfusion is required intraoperatively and some preoperative blood screening."

Dr. Ayoola added that while these arrangements were being made, Kehinde started gasping and immediately cardiopulmonary resuscitation was commenced, but unfortunately, the child didn't respond positively, and was declared dead at 8 am on December 5, just over four hours in FMC care.

"Due to the unexpected turn of events, the family of Kehinde was advised that a proper postmortem examination by the Lagos State Coroner Service would be ideal to ascertain the true cause of death. But the family did not appear favourably disposed to that idea. The complaint we initially got from the parents was that the drug the nurse injected was the cause of death. Patient's medication was reviewed and the drugs were as prescribed and the same batch of drugs had been administered to very many other patients without any problem.

"The death of Kehinde, while unfortunate and disheartening, could have been avoided if his parents had sought early treatment and presented to FMC Ebute-Metta much earlier. The disease process leading to Kehinde's death had been progressing over six or more days prior to presentation. By the time he got to us, his situation had become quite delicate. Even an adult with the diagnosis Kehinde had and the state he presented to us would likely have a similar outcome - the prognosis of treatment is known worldwide to be very poor.

"The allegation of negligence made by Mr. Bashiru against one of our nurses is completely a new dimension and is currently being investigated by us, and if he's found not to have performed his duties to the highest standard expected of him, he will be sanctioned appropriately," Dr. Ayoola explained.

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