



MEDICAL RECORDS
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AFRICAN CANCER CENTRE, ERUWA – THE FIRST STEP

The origin of AFRICAN CANCER CENTRE, ERUWA could be traced to the email initiated by my teacher, Prof A O Williams on Saturday. 15th September 2012:

“Dear all,

“I have been unable to attract funds from willing investors for my proposed comprehensive AFRICAN CANCER CENTRE, ACC, because there are no insurance schemes in the country from which projected incomes can be calculated for return on investments. A business plan shows a massive loss from any investment on the project. The question is: should we continue like this or totally depend on the government?

“After 50 years of independence, should we not ask the question whether we are ready for health insurance? Unless these questions are asked and answers provided we will never know. Let us see what happens in Ogun State. Awolowo tried free education in the West by asking a question whether the West was ready for free education. We have the answer now.

“Many states that failed to seek answers to that question in 1955 or so are just adopting free education in 2012, about 60 years later when the envied south west is miles ahead. No international declaration suits Nigeria whether it is Alma Ata which is "HELL FOR ALL" instead of "HEALTH FOR ALL" or MDG which to me means that it will take Nigeria a hundred years to achieve our development goals and so many other air-conditioned acronyms that emanate from the developed agencies of the UN. We as Nigerians must develop our own location specific acronyms based on available data.

“When i was involved with recruiting Nigerians with PhDs from foreign universities for Nigerian universities (Ibadan, Calabar, Sokoto etc..) it was striking that some of the candidates were highly knowledgeable in areas that were not sufficiently relevant for Nigeria. USA had trained 660 Africans to PhD level in agriculture but the more they trained abroad the less food was produced in Africa. In contrast, India did not adopt this route and became food sufficient. An African who gets a PhD on a topic like “THE CHROMIUM CONTENT IN NEW JERSEY SOIL” or to quote the example by the inimitable late Prof Alexander Brown who interviewed a Nigerian whose PhD thesis was on “THE EFFECT OF HEAT ON DONKEY’S TESTICLES”, emphasized the dangers of relevance of foreign trained experts for Africa who may wish to continue such research on donkeys whose testicles are already exposed to intense heat in Africa.

We have to be careful adopting these acronyms or wise sayings without scrutiny on relevance. For example, "AN APPLE A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY" when apples are not grown in many parts of tropical Africa and where they are grown, the price is not affordable. "MAKE HAY WHILE THE SUN SHINES" is another foreign saying whereas the sun is shining for 9 months in tropical Africa and there is no hay making culture or expertise.

"Let us answer these tough questions by experimenting. Let us monitor and evaluate the Ogun insurance experimentation which in my opinion must be better than nothing. The real issue is whether it should be concurrent or consecutive in sequence to other competing claims. I do not know the answer and we can only wait and see if there is monitoring and evaluation over a five year period. Nation building is a marathon and not a sprint. **THE LEVEL OF DEBATE ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD IS DIRECTLY PROPORTIONAL TO EXPERIENCE, KNOWLEDGE AND OUTCOME DATA.**

"A LUTA CONTINUA."

In response, I wrote:

"My dear teacher,

"Your latest contribution is QUITE CHALLENGING and evoking in me some exciting proposal.

"LET US ANSWER THESE TOUGH QUESTIONS BY EXPERIMENTING. LET US MONITOR AND EVALUATE THE OGUN INSURANCE EXPERIMENTATION WHICH IN MY OPINION MUST BE BETTER THAN NOTHING'. The National Health Insurance Scheme for federal civil servants has been in existence for over five years. A look at it, if FACTS and FIGURES are available, will be rewarding. But, my innate feeling tells me a big scam will be exposed as with other similar schemes, for example, the pension schemes.

"Concerning training specialists abroad, I am grateful to God and you, my teachers in Ibadan, that I am the CONTROL in the medical profession in the areas of service, teaching/training and research. The conclusion is obvious.

"I refused to travel to the UK in 1981 at a cost. Three decades later, I was invited to present a paper at the conference of the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland (Training 21st Century Surgeons in West Africa.)

<http://www.ifrs-rural.com/TRAINING%2021ST%20CENTURY%20SURGEONS.pdfPDF,66kb>

I am not sure any of my contemporaries has been so privileged. In 2012, a paper on our practice by a visiting UK medical student was published in the Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England. (Vaughan-Huxley E A remarkable surgical training opportunity in Nigeria. Annals of the Royal College of Surgeons of England (Suppl) 2012; 94' 108 – 110

<http://www.ifrs-rural.com/REMARKABLE%20TRAINING.pdf>

http://www.internationalsurgery.org.uk/news_events.htm

http://www.internationalsurgery.org.uk/pdf/remarkable_surgical_training_opportunity_Nigeria.pdf

"Although I am not a biomedical engineer by training, I was the only Nigerian invited to present a paper at the WHO's First Global Forum on Medical Devices that took place in Bangkok in 2010. With my son, Yombo, I am presenting a paper and a poster at the ongoing London conference on Appropriate Healthcare Technologies for Developing Countries.

"So, we need to reassess and adjust several aspects of postgraduate training in Nigeria using my experience as the CONTROL to arrive at a CONCLUSION. Prof O O Ajayi made this aspect of

research clear to us, neophyte clinical students, in 1972 with that acronym, NCNC – NO CONTROL NO CONCLUSION. In our naivety, we thought he was about talking politics like most of present day consultants do at virtually every forum.

“Sir, coming to the subject dear to your heart, let me give a summary of the life of AWOJOB I CLINIC ERUWA, ACE, from 1986 to date and end with a pragmatic proposal you will not refuse!!!!

“Between 1983 and 1986, I made the District Hospital, Eruwa functional producing intravenous fluids from July 1984 and building a 12 bed ward with a sum of N15 000,00 (fifteen thousand naira), N11 000.00 from monies collected from patients I operated on and the balance in cash and kind from the community. The building would have cost N50 000.00 in other hands and of poor quality.

“In September 1986, the government asked me to stop and report that I had stopped because I was not “giving returns” to the officers at the secretariat. I called the bluff and resigned setting up ACE with massive community support. We moved to our 20 acre permanent site in August 1990 paying N234 000.00 to government for survey. No fee was demanded or paid to the community. In 1988, I was given the merit award in rural practice by the state government. In 2000, I was offered the chieftaincy title of BAASEGUN of Eruwa. The iwuye ceremony is in gestation!!

“Now, 80 per cent of our patients come from outside Ibarapa district mainly from Lagos. Surgery for carcinoma of the breast is fast becoming a significant portion of our workload. We keep a cancer register and have had to produce our histopathology slides since 2003 due to the decay in UCH, Ibadan.

“In 2008, on a part of the land, Dr B G K Ajayi has built a N10 million eye hospital with me as the consultant architect, structural engineer and contractor. The hospital would have cost N30 million in another place. There is a resident medical officer with diploma in ophthalmology extracting cataracts every Thursday.

“In 2011 at the international conference of the INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RURAL SURGERY and ASSOCIATION OF RURAL SURGICAL PRACTITIONERS OF NIGERIA, we commissioned the ADELOYE AJAYI AUDITORIUM that could sit 1000 delegates. The estimated cost of the auditorium is N15 million, a third of what it would cost elsewhere.

“In June 2012, we activated the RAMON VILLALONGA IBARAPA HERNIA CENTRE that cost N6 million. About N1.5 million was contributed by foreign donors (Dr Ramon Villalonga and Mr John Pickering).

“In July 2012, we upgraded our CENTRAL STERILIZING AND IV FLUID PRODUCTION UNIT with N1 million donation from an anonymous Nigerian.

“The Damien Foundation that has sponsored the free treatment of patients with tuberculosis in Nigeria signed an MOU with us in July 2012 to provide this free treatment and upgrade our laboratory. The Foundation has donated a binocular microscope and laboratory soft ware in the management of the patients.

“Now, the proposal: HRM The Eleruwa of Eruwa will gladly grant your project a 20 acre piece of land on the other side of the stream that bounds ACE in the north. It requires that construction WILL START WITHIN ONE MONTH of paying the government for the survey.

“We will deploy our construction equipment (mobile concrete mixer, sandcrete mixer, rotating sand sieve, interlocking block making machine) and the dedicated artisans of Eruwa. My elder brother, an Old Grammarian, President of Nigeria Institution of Structural Engineers, Engr (Dr) ‘Busola Awojobi,

will readily offer his professional services as he has done with all our buildings and in our alma mater, the CMS Grammar School, Bariga, Lagos.

“When could I come for you to visit ACE and see the kabiyesi? Could I broach the subject with the oba?”

“With kind regards.”

My teacher replied on 17th September:

“Dear Dr Awojobi.

“You are not only progressive but a high achiever in an environment plagued by adversity. You continue to be motivated by your love of achievement. Not many people have been lucky and endowed with so many positive results that you have catalogued in your email.

“I attach our site plan for the AFRICAN CANCER CENTRE in LAGOS for your information and also a flier for your information. I will certainly be very glad to inform the ACC Board about the offer of a 20 acre parcel of land in Eruwa that can be developed as a cancer centre to serve the area in collaboration with ACE,

“I will be meeting with the Minister of State in the Ministry of Health in Abuja tomorrow on ACC matters and will be going to Europe and USA on October 1. Please accept this as authority to discuss the project with the Oba and please let me know if I can be collected in Lagos on November 12 or 13, 2012 to meet with the Oba and to see the proposed site. Please confirm suitability or give alternative dates. I can make myself available on September 26 or 27, 2012. FOR AVOIDANCE OF DOUBT, YOUR PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED IN PRINCIPLE SUBJECT TO CONTRACT. UP SCHOOL!!!

Regards.

On the same day, I replied:

“Thanks Sir,

“As soon as I return to Eruwa from the London conference on 2nd October, I will confirm if the kabiyesi will be in the palace on November 12th or 13th.

“And here is ending with our School Song (LIVES ARE IN THE MAKING HERE!!)

“With kind regards,”

LIVES ARE IN THE MAKING HERE

1. Lives are in the making here.
Hearts are in the waking here.
Mighty undertaking here.
UP! AND ON!

We are arming for the fight.
Pressing on with all our might.
Pluming wings for higher flight.
UP! AND ON!

Up Boys! Truest fame
Lies in high endeavour.
Play the game,
Keep the flame burning brightly ever.

Figure 1

2. Fear before us lies the way.
Time for work and time for play.
Fill the measure while we may.
UP! AND ON!

Life and time will not delay.
Time is running fast away.
Life is now today, today.
UP! AND ON!

Up Boys! Truest fame, etc

3. Foes in plenty we shall meet.
Hearts courageous scorn defeat,
So we press with eager feet.
UP! AND ON!

Ever onward to the fight.
Ever upward to the light.
Ever true to God and Right,
UP! AND ON!

Up Boys! Truest fame, etc

4. Looking up by faith, we see
Christ our Saviour on the tree.
Lifted up for you and me,
UP! AND ON!

Crowning Christ as Sovereign Lord.
Fighting with the Spirit's sword.
Singing as we cross the ford.
UP! AND ON!

Up Boys! Truest fame, etc

5. Africa will surely rise.
Fail we not in high emprise.
Hidden here the secret lies.
UP! AND ON!

Hail scholar carrissima.
Laus Deo sursum corda.
Nisi Dominus Frustra!!!
UP! AND ON!

Up Boys! Truest fame, etc



Figure 2

On 3rd December 2012, Prof Williams visited ACE and the proposed site of the cancer centre. He paid a courtesy call on the Eleruwa of Eruwa, Oba S A Adegbola, Akindele I. Present at the occasion were my engineer brother, Busola, my cousin, Engr Deremi Awojobi, my classmate, Dr Tayo Apampa and his wife, Sola, the pharmacist in Eruwa, Mr Jare Gbadamosi and my colleague from the neighbouring town of Igboora, Dr M H Adabanija. (Pictures 1 and 2) It was decided that another meeting would hold between board members of ACC and Eruwa community.

In our visitors' book, Prof Williams wrote:

"Dr Yombo Awojobi, this is the beginning of a long journey that will be a legacy to unborn generations. The alleviation of cancer suffering, hitherto unattended, will be mediated by your progressive and visionary approaches to medical care. And, I look forward to be part of this revolution in rural Africa. Congratulations on all your achievements and thank you and your wife for the hospitality. Regards to all, particularly the Eleruwa. See you soon. The battle continues!"

The epoch making second meeting took place on 20th December. In attendance were Mr Kunle Olumide, chairman, board of ACC, Prof Williams and his friend Dr Emmanuel Nwokedi, a radiation oncologist based in the US. The community was led by the king, his high chiefs, baales and eminent citizens of the town. (Figure 3) The proposed site of the centre was inspected where Dr Nwokedi remarked it was the most appropriate location for the bunkers that would house the linear accelerators, LINACS, and would cost less to build than the proposed seaside site in Lagos. (Figure 4)



Figure 3



Figure 4

I was invited to a meeting of the board of ACC on 15th March 2013 during which I informed members that Eruwa community had donated a 20 acre piece of land as promised, that the community and ACE were prepared to build the centre within a short time and hoped that the board, at that point, would be prepared to activate the centre with equipment and personnel.

Like the Chinese would say: "A thousand mile journey starts with a step" and we, the Yoruba, would add that "A man with a problem initiates its resolution"; the first step in the realization of the African Cancer Centre, Eruwa was initiated on 17th April when the excavator was deployed to the site to prepare a 50m x 45m x 4.8m underground bunker that would accommodate three LINACS. This occasion was witnessed by members of an NGO, MERCY SAID NO, based in the USA (<http://www.mercysaidno.org/>) and Dr Olaoluwa Lawson of ALABA LAWSON FOUNDATION, Abeokuta, south west Nigeria. (Figures 5 - 8) This first step is estimated to cost N1.8 million naira.



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7



Figure 8

It is hoped that in a few years, RURAL ONCOLOGY will be firmly established in Eruwa with the attendant advantages of bringing health care to the doorsteps of Nigerians in rural and urban settings, creation of job opportunities for Eruwa community and stemming the rural urban drift.

“The battle continues”

Oluyombo A Awojobi

20th April 2013.