

**Beatrice M. Joly, O.B.E., MD, F.R.O.G., FRCS, (1902 – 1999)**  
**Medical Icon and Pioneer**

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*“History tempers our overreaction and haste and lends a sense of balance in our assessment when credit has to be given to those who have served a Faculty, a College or a Country.”* Adeloje, 2004

**Summary:** Professor and Head of Surgery (1948 – 1958), Beatrice M. Joly was the Foundation Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, University College, Ibadan (1948 – 1949). She was born on 14 Dec, 1902; a time when female education was considered unimportant. Beatrice made up her mind very early on what she wanted out of life. She studied Medicine and excelled. She obtained the M.B.B.S. degree in 1930 carting away the best prizes. She went on to pursue a successful postgraduate medical training in Obstetrics and Gynecology, and later in Surgery. She worked briefly as a general physician in 1933 before traveling to India where she became a lecturer and rose to the position of professor seven years after getting her M.B.B.S. degree. In 1947, she came to Nigeria as the first professor appointed to the new University of Ibadan and subsequently contributed immensely to the development of Nigeria’s first University. She was the first Head of department of Surgery and laid the groundwork for subsequent growth of the Department. Beatrice Joly laid the framework for the Department of Surgery which eventually became the 2<sup>nd</sup> most productive Department in the first 3 decades of the College of Medicine, Ibadan (by publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> to the Department of Medicine). The Department today is undeniably an asset not only to Nigeria but to Africa. She died on 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1999. She would always be remembered as a unique woman, a brilliant scholar, an excellent surgeon, and a visionary leader; a pioneer whose contributions have continued to produce excellent specialists who have touched the lives of untold millions all over the continent.

Planning university development anywhere is very difficult and expensive and the cost of a medical school is much higher; in terms of personnel, money, energy, and time. The future of any great venture depends almost exclusively on the pioneers who laid the foundations and the first building blocks. Perhaps there is no venture greater than that of founding a University and a Medical school. The development of the University of Ibadan is an important part of the History of Nigeria. The University of Ibadan, Large, Magnificent, and Prosperous as it is today, started as a single individual. In his book on the early history of birth of the University, Mellanby stated that *“at the beginning, in 1947, I went out to Nigeria as Principal-Designate of the University College; at that stage, I was the College, which had no other existence.”* He had to make the decisions that determined where and when the college was to open and who and what would determine her scope.

These were no easy decisions, the future of the University at Ibadan depended on them; Mellanby chose well. Among his earliest decisions was staff recruitment. The very first professor to be engaged was Beatrice Joly, a remarkable woman and Professor of Surgery.

The University College Ibadan came into being in 1948. Clinical teaching at Ibadan commenced on 7<sup>th</sup> October 1957, the same year in which the University Teaching Hospital was formally opened. That same year the Faculty of Medicine, of which the Department of Surgery was a part, came into existence.

Beatrice Joly was born in London on December 14, 1902. Her father was a Londoner and her mother was Irish. She spent most of her youth in the Middle East and became very conversant with Arabic. Most of

her schooling was done in England. As a child, she read a lot of Agatha Christie, showing early signs of one who is to put the skill of an investigator to good use. Beatrice studied Medicine at the Royal Free Hospital Medical School of the University of London from October 1925 to November 1930. During her undergraduate career, she gained the Gant Medal in Surgery and the Dorothy Chick Gift in Obstetrics and Gynecology. These prizes were the highest awarded by the school in those subjects. In July 1930, she passed the Conjoint Diplomas of the Royal Colleges of England. In December of that same year, she obtained the MBBS degree of the University of London with honors. She gained distinction in Medicine. Her academic performances won her a special scholarship in 1931 so that she could pursue a postgraduate course of study, which she did.

All through her life, passion and vigor had been her approach to work. She believed she could achieve whatever she set her mind to. This was also the manner with which she did her postgraduate studies. Beatrice had her postgraduate training at the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin. In 1933 she gained the MD degree in Obstetrics and Gynecology and the MRCP, both of London. For the greater part of 1933, she did general practice and then left for India in 1934 under the scheme of Women's Medical service. To get the job at the Medical College in India she had to pass an examination in Hindi. She taught for 3 years at the Women Medical College in New Delhi, the first institution of its kind in India, and rose from the post of lecturer in surgery to vice president of the college. Beatrice Joly worked very hard; she took evening duties in the Obstetrics Department and gained wide experience in midwifery. She learnt the local language and was able to pass an examination in Hindustani which resulted in her getting the job in India.



In January 1937, Beatrice Joly was appointed professor of Surgery and Head of Department at the Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi. The College was then part of the University of Punjab and the M.B.B.S. degrees obtained there were registrable in the United Kingdom. In 1939, she went to the United Kingdom for the FRCS of Edinburgh in General Surgery. For her various activities, she became a foundation member of the Association of Surgeons of India.

The years preceding 1947 were years of intense struggle by Indians for independence. The political struggle disturbed Joly so much that she decided to leave. In 1947, India gained her political Independence. It was about that time that Joly saw an advert for the post of professor of Surgery at the newly founded University College, Ibadan. She was persuaded to apply for the Job by Mellanby, who had heard that she was a memorable lady with first class ability and attractive character. Joly applied for the Job and on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 1948 she arrived in Nigeria. Before coming to Nigeria, she had information that the country had at least 15 years before Independence. She was appointed professor of Surgery, University College, Ibadan on 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1948. Her duties were well spelt out “*to develop your department as a centre of teaching and research. This will include discussion with the appropriate members of the University of London on the syllabus for your subject within the terms of the special relationship with the University of London; assistance to the architect in the design and building of the permanent accommodation for your Department; supervision of the ordering of apparatus and equipment for your Department; and, in the compiling of booklists and the taking of other steps to arrange for the provision of library facilities in your subject. You will be a member of the academic Board of the college.*”

Professor Joly got down to business immediately she arrived in Nigeria. She started teaching Surgery in Lagos General Hospital on March 8, 1948. Her first interesting clinical case to the last batch of Yaba students was on aneurysm. She spent a lot of time in the planning of the Hospital at Ibadan and in setting up her department. After a month in Lagos, she took time off to tour the country visiting many famous sites in the eastern and western parts of Nigeria. With this experience she was able to work with multi-ethnic groups that built the University College, Ibadan. She was appointed the first Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in 1948, a position she held for 1 year. She became Dean again in 1957 – 58. Professor E.O. Akande was the last to hold the position of Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and in 1980 became the first Provost of the College of Medicine.

Head of Department	Period
Prof Joly, B.M.	1948 - 1958
Prof Davey, W.W.	1958 - 1963
Prof Richards, R.C.	1963 - 1965
Prof Ngu, V.A.	1965 - 1969
Prof Odeku, E.L.	1969 - 1971
Prof Solanke, T.F.	1971 - 1974
Prof Adeloje, A.	1974 - 1977
Prof Oluwasanmi, J.O.	1977 - 1979
Prof Olurin, E.O.	1979 - 1982
Prof Ajayi, O.O.	1982 - 1985
Prof Grillo, I.A.	1985 - 1988
Prof Nkposong, E.O.	1988 - 1989
Prof Ajao, O.G.	1989 - 1993
Prof Lawani, J.	1993 - 1994
Prof Adekunle, O.O.	1994 - 1996
Prof Lawani, J.	1997 - 1999
Prof Adebayo, O.A.	1999 - 2002
Dr. Ladipo, J.K.	2002 - 2004
Prof Oluwatosin, O.M.	2004 - 2006

**Table 1:** Heads of Department of Surgery (1948 to 2006)

Name	Year	Department
Joly, Beatrice M.	1948 - 49	Surgery
Brown, A	1949 - 50	Medicine
Smith, A	1950 - 52	Anatomy
Brown, A	1952 - 56	Medicine
Grayson, J	1956 - 57	Physiology
Joly, Beatrice M.	1957 - 58	Surgery
Ajose, A.O.	1958 - 59	PSM
Collard, P.J.	1959 - 60	Microbiology
Edington, G.M.	1960 - 62	Pathology
Edozien, J.C.	1962 - 66	Chemical Pathology
Lambo, T.A.	1966 - 68	Psychiatry
Odeku, E.L.	1968 - 70	Surgery
Akinkugbe, O.O.	1970 - 74	Medicine
Osuntokun, B.O.	1974 - 78	Medicine
Akande, E.O.	1978 - 80	Obstetrics & Gynecology

**Table 2:** Deans of Faculty of Medicine (1948 – 1980)

Professor Beatrice Joly was Head of Department of Surgery for 10 years (1948 – 58). During that period she set up the Department, was involved in decisions on the construction of the Teaching Hospital, the Medical school, and supplies (including equipment) to her Department. She played a significant role in every area of the early days of the Medical College and the Teaching Hospital. During her second tenure as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, the Teaching Hospital was commissioned by the Queen of England. Having being a foundation member of many associations and movements in India, her experiences served her well in Nigeria. She understood the challenges of a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society and was able to adapt to harsh conditions that sometimes prevailed in those days of the birth of Nigeria's first university. She was able to draw out the best in people and was comfortable with her duties. She mixed competence with the ability for compassion and effective communication. She knew that to get ahead meant to put others first and she was never lacking in courage. Her administrative duties prevented her from doing much research herself. Her publications were few, (Table 4) but the Department of Surgery was second in the number of publications in the first three Decades of Medical Research (Table 3). This, a noteworthy achievement, tells of her excellent leadership as Head of the Department. She worked tirelessly to set up a Department that was conducive and that supported the academic growth of her colleagues.

Ten years after arriving Nigeria, she had achieved all the duties and conditions spelt out in her appointment letter. The university was well established, the Faculty of Medicine was thriving, and the Teaching Hospital had been commissioned. Teaching and Research in her Department of Surgery were in full sway. The Department had attracted and engaged a number of highly skilled staff. The surgeons and the surgeries were beautiful. Student lectures were of very high quality and the students were rated amongst the best in the World. After a decade of dedicated and flawless service to the College, she returned to the United Kingdom and married her long-term friend Mr. Baynes. Her meritorious service to other Nations was recognized by her country with the award of the O.B.E (Officer of the British Empire), a few years after she returned to England. She lived a long and fulfilled life. She died on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1999, aged 96 years. She will never be forgotten; no history of the University College, Ibadan is complete without her. While she was here, and up onto now, the Department of Surgery never lacked great minds and skilful hands. Professor Joly left Nigeria two years before Nigeria gained her Independence but her life has remained a testimony of the role of focus, diligence, faith, and good nature

(character) in the journey of success that is unforgettable. Forty one years after Nigeria's Independence, Prof Beatrice Joly's Department of Surgery has continued to grow in size, strength, and quality of output.

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Department/Unit	Listed publications	Rank	Department	Listed publications	Rank
Medicine	541	1	Radiology and Radiotherapy	143	13
Surgery	510	2	Physiology	127	14
Obstetrics and Gynecology	283	3	Anesthesiology	92	15
Pediatrics	241	4	Human Nutrition	41	16
Pathology	221	5	Nursing	37	17
PSM	198	6	Anatomy	37	17
Chemical Pathology	190	7	ENT	32	18
Biochemistry	182	8	Dentistry	27	19
Viral Research Lab	174	9	ICH	27	19
Medical Microbiology	165	10	Ophthalmology	24	20
Pharmacology and Therapeutics	163	11	Ibarapa Community Project	6	21
Psychiatry	163	11	Medical Library	4	22
Hematology	161	12	<b>Total</b>	<b>3,789</b>	

**Table 3:** Three decades of medical research (1948 to 1980) at the College of Medicine, Ibadan

Joly, BM. 1954. The Acute abdomen in Ibadan. *Ass Med Stud Niger Mag*, 7: 6 – 9

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**Table 4:** List of Prof Joly's publications while at Ibadan

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