

## **Tribute to Dr. Mobolaji Olufemi Dada, 1962-2010**

### *Consultant Haematologist*

Femi was born on the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 1962 in Ibadan as the second child to the loving family of Engr. Michael Dehinde Dada of Lagos and Otunba (Mrs.) Regina Ola-Adebo Dada of Odogbolu, Ogun State. He started his early education in Lagos at St. Mary's Private school, Ajele on the Lagos Island and attended St. Gregory's College, Obalende, Lagos from 1973-1978. This period of time arguably had the most lasting impact on his relatively short but eventful sojourn here on earth. Not only did he receive high quality secular education at St. Gregory's college, the strong instruction in morality and Christian religious tenets served as an ever present moral compass all through his adult life. Most importantly, Femi developed a close-knit circle of friends at St. Gregory who in fact became more than just friends but family. He maintained a strong bond of friendship and loyalty with this group up to the last day of his earthly life. Worthy of mention among this category of friends would be Messrs Kehinde Vincent, Fred Ijewere, Mike Fregene and Honorable Justice Deji Balogun.

Femi later proceeded to England for his Advanced Level studies in preparation for university education after which he attended the University of Ilorin. There is no doubt that he was a toast of the entire school and the most beloved member of his class. As was typical of Femi, he acquired another layer of trusted friends who became part of his loyal family. Foremost and most devoted among this group of friends are Dr. Dapo Oduwole and Dr. Adesokan. It is noteworthy that at the end of his six years in Ilorin, Femi not only got a medical degree but also acquired his nickname, "Dodo", by which he would be known for many years to come.

Femi's career path crossed with mine as we were both starting our residency training sixteen years ago at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital, Idi-Araba. It is one of those

incredulous life events where an instant friendship with someone you barely met lasts an entire lifetime. To know Femi and become his friend is to become like family to him. Femi's sense of humor, humility, foresight and planning for the future is unparalleled and definitely a great lesson to me. He was greatly endeared to all those who came in contact with him, whether his contemporaries, senior or junior colleagues, administrators or even the lowliest of the staff members. Femi was never one to ignore or belittle people as a result of their position or station in life. With him, age really did not count but substance, integrity and personal comportment reign supreme. What you say was less important as how you say it and most especially what you ultimately do afterward. Femi showed us all how to be deferential to authority but not be subservient to material wealth or positions while at the same time taking great care not to be haughty. He had the magic touch of always finding the right balance! Idi-Araba had a major impact on Femi's professional life where he received a strong training under his mentors including Professors Akinsete, Akanmu and Okanny.

He also established a close-knit family of friends including my humble self, Dr. Mary Ibeaji, Dr. Kemi Esan and General Tilewa Amusu. His haematology training and worldwide exposure definitely served him well as the chairman of the Lagos State Blood Transfusion service. While in this position, Femi was noted and respected for being more interested in staying in contact with the staff than in issuing contracts. He used this opportunity to highlight the need for strong community involvement in order to have a reliable blood procurement and distribution mechanism. Such a service is a necessity for any decent society and I want to use this important medium and somber occasion to implore his successor in that office to take that service to the next level.

## Obituary

Despite his comfortable upbringing, Femi was passionate about self-development. His quest for career advancement and societal improvement made him apply for an International fellowship to undergo first-hand training in bone marrow transplant. He spent 6 weeks as a visiting hematologist at the Dana Faber Cancer Institute of Harvard University, Boston USA in 2009. He returned as a guest at the Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University in Atlanta, USA in March 2010. He did all this in pursuit of his vision and dream to pioneer bone marrow transplantation in Nigeria. He came for the training at great personal cost and was prepared to spend 6 months away from his family including his twin boys, who were barely 3 years old. He devoted himself to learning the latest techniques while working with his mentor, Dr. Edmund Waller on how best to adapt these techniques in resource limited settings. Femi took the initiative and accepted the personal deprivation that came with the pursuit of knowledge not out of hope for any personal aggrandizement but for the greater good of the Nigerian society. Although he tried his best, this was a dream he could not fulfill before he died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2010 at the age of 48 years. We should all strongly advocate and support any effort by the faculty of pathology to pursue this dream for the greater benefit of our people and to the honor and memory of Dr. Mobolaji Olufemi Dada.

I was honored, humbled and attained greater enlightenment spending Femi's last 6 months on earth by his side. To know a real man is to see him confront one of life's most vicious tragedies and not be afraid or compromise long-held convictions. We had known Femi in good health and knew him to always examine the propriety of his actions even where societal attitude would be accepting. I am proud to relate that Dodo remained incorruptible to the end and showed that truly, he was a man in the real sense of the word. Despite the enormity of his medical condition, Femi was not the one to feel desperate, disappointed or dejected up

till his last day. He met an impossible circumstance, faced it with dignity and uncommon courage and gave it his all. Dodo remained true to himself and was his usual self, humble and funny, planning and providing for his family. In his characteristic style, he was very objective in trying to understand the etiology of his medical condition and used the opportunity to instruct friends and family members on the best preventative actions. How much more selfless could a man be!

Knowing Femi in his adult years both as a trainee and as a teacher to the next generation of doctors, I make bold to say that our society has lost a real man of value. Femi showed us clearly that it is not how long but how well. We are comforted by the fact that he lived really well and also did well for himself, his family and the Nigerian society. We have all been blessed and greatly enriched by Femi's friendship while he was here. The moral imperative is whether or not we can imbibe his positive qualities of humility, simplicity, perseverance, honesty, open-mindedness and generosity to make this society a better place for us and for generations coming behind. May we have many more like him for he was a good man, who gave his utmost to make our society a better place and left this world with a proud legacy.

May God's bright light of mercy continue to shine upon him. Dr. Mobolaji Olufemi Dada was survived by his loving and caring wife, Victoria Dada (nee Adouayi), twin sons, Mica and Michael, his elderly father, and two siblings, Barrister Yomi Dada and Mrs. Bola Lawal.

Adieu Dodo!

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