

A Remembrance: Professor Oladipo O. Akinkugbe,
MBBS (Lond), D.Phil, MD, FRCP, FMCP, FWACP, NNOM, CFR

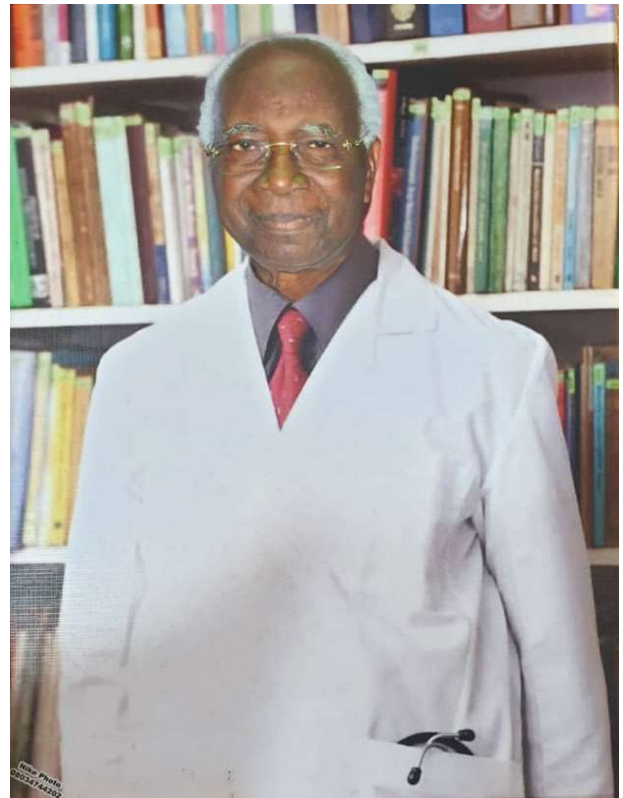
Samuel Ajayi, Fatiu Arogundade, Yemi Raji, Aliyu Abdu, Adanze Asinobi, Ifeoma Ulasi, Ayodeji Arije, Egun Bamgboye, Babatunde Salako, Solomon Kadiri, Adewale Akinsola and The Nigerian Association of Nephrology

Emeritus Professor Oladipo Akinkugbe, physician, and one of Africa's foremost medical educationists and administrators, passed on 15th of June, 2020 at age 86 years. Born on July 17, 1933, the second son of Chief and Chief (Mrs) Akinkugbe in Ondo where he had his early education, he later went on to Government College, Ibadan for his secondary education. He attended University College, Ibadan, and University of London where he had his medical degree in 1958. He trained at the London Hospital and King's College Hospital, London, and obtained the MRCP in 1961 after which he went to Balliol College in Oxford University in 1962 for the D.Phil working under Sir George Pickering FRS, Regius Professor of Medicine for the D.Phil, which he obtained in 1964. His thesis was *Angiotensin and the Kidney*. He later bagged Doctor of Medicine (MD) from King's College, London for a thesis on '*Observations on High Blood Pressure in the West African*' in 1968.

He became Professor of Medicine in 1968, at the age of 35, he was the Dean of Medicine at the University of Ibadan from 1970-197?. He held the distinction of having been one of the few, not just in Nigeria but in the whole of Academia, to have concurrently held the positions of Head of Medicine, Dean of Medicine, and acting Vice-Chancellor at some time. He was a visiting Professor at Harvard University, 1974-1975.

He became the Foundation Principal and later Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, 1975-1978, and then Vice Chancellor ABU, 1978-1980, and in later years he served as the Pro-Chancellor of the University of Port-Harcourt, 1986-1990. He returned once again to Oxford University in 1981 as Visiting Professor of cardiovascular medicine and fellow of Balliol College in 1982. He was an emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Ibadan, from 1997 till death.

He served on many WHO expert committees including Cardiovascular Diseases, Health Manpower Development (1973-1980) and Global Advisory Committee on Health Research (1990-1995), OAU Scientific Panel on Health Management (1970-1980).



He led the Nigerian non-communicable diseases survey and produced its landmark report in 1997. He was the major initiator and founder of the Nigerian Association of Nephrology in 1987 and the Nigerian Hypertension Society some years later becoming the foundation President in both. Well recognized as a capable administrator he has served government in numerous capacities including

Chairman of Nigeria's Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board.

In addition to positions at the WHO, he held positions on the councils of the International Society of Hypertension, World Heart Foundation and served on the editorial boards of several journals including *Kidney International*, *Journal of Hypertension*, *Journal of Human Hypertension*.

A prolific writer, he authored, co-authored or edited over 10 books and many more chapters in books. Notable among these are *High Blood Pressure in the African* (1972), *A Compendium of Clinical Medicine* co-authored with Prof. A. O. Falase, a renowned cardiologist, former student, and former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, and much later, his autobiography "Footprints and Footnotes".

Professor Akinkugbe retired from the University of Ibadan in 1995 but was still actively engaged in national service in education and health. He was the Chairman of an elaborate programme by the government to retool and refurbish the tertiary hospitals in the early 2000s. Under this programme these hospitals were equipped with the latest equipment and facilities for diagnostic and treatment purposes. Most of those facilities are still in use in many Nigerian hospitals today.

Professor Akinkugbe made a great name for himself and cultivated the friendship and loyalty of so many by doing many "little things". We need not enquire into his pedigree or genealogy for, some men and women, by the sheer size of their own accomplishment and usefulness, are their own ancestors. He is remembered by his classmates as that "tall and bookish" boy who seemed to have focused his mind on intellectual pursuits from the beginning. He read under the tree behind the hostel during the siesta, we were told by another classmate. "He was not social and had no time to visit us while he was a medical student", another recalled at his Festschrift. He was law abiding enough to do errands in his first day in school for a "senior" who later turned out to be his classmate. And when challenged, he could win, with "his long, impenetrable arms", a boxing match, even though he was not reputed to be a sportsman.

His great works and achievements have been chronicled elsewhere; we write here only of his daily interactions with people.

Scores of distinguished and visible personalities have recounted in different ways how Professor Akinkugbe had launched them on successful career paths. Others remember acts of kindness, an unexpected courtesy, and sometimes, elaborate witty and humorous table talk with the professor. His considerable and wide network of colleagues and collaborators is often used for mentoring. If you got his attention as a diligent and responsible trainee, you may sooner than later be tapped on the shoulder to proceed on a training "abroad". He has made "life a great bundle of little things", as the Physician Poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in book, *The Professor at Breakfast Table*.

Professor Akinkugbe was at home among his peers as well as the most junior students. His aristocratic background notwithstanding, he was very approachable and simple; and it is little wonder then that generations of students who have become successful and great continue to respect and keep in touch with him. He was a wise and clever person, who we may not describe as a "no-nonsense person", and one who did not "suffer fools gladly" either, for he was not stern or intolerant. He also had a keen memory for remembering faces, and sometimes the genealogy of his students. His old students were sometimes embarrassed when he reminded them of the answers they gave in clinical examinations, and which were not exactly different from the ones their fathers gave many years before. He does this without consulting his "red notebook" where he kept records of his students.

Professor Akinkugbe will be remembered by his students, a grateful academia, and the nation which he served till he breathed his last.

He enjoyed playing golf, collecting clocks, and bird watching.

Professor Akinkugbe is survived by his wife, Professor Folashade Akinkugbe and his two sons, Olumide and Kayode.