

Obituary

PROF. ANTHONY OKPANI

(10th January 1955 - 23rd January 2021)

Emeritus Professor Kelsey Atangamuerimo Harrison, NNOM, DSc, FRCOG
Tuusula, Finland.

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The announcement of the death of Anthony Okpani came as a rude shock from which I am yet to recover. We had known ourselves for the best part of forty years. He qualified from University of Ibadan in 1979, but it was in 1981 that we first met at University of Port Harcourt Teaching Hospital. He was one of four foundation doctors in the post registration residency programme in obstetrics and gynaecology, and I was one of his three teachers. The others were



Dr. Celestine John and Dr. Nimi Briggs, who headed the department. Conditions were exceptionally austere and difficult for everybody, and they were to remain so for many years.

As well as being a good human being, Okpani had a pioneering instinct, he worked exceptionally hard, he was able to take full advantage of the little that was available – and they were very few in those days. Against the odds, he prospered and eventually became a respected professor in the discipline. He earned much respect by doing all this through merit. Based all the while at University of Port-Harcourt and its teaching hospital, he was seen as a committed professional who served both

institutions well, and who also did sterling work for the Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of Nigeria as one of its leading lights particularly in that society's Eastern sector.

Tony was a delightful man. As well as being his teacher and a mentor, I was to benefit from the association in several ways. One was unique. 1998 saw my relocation from Nigeria to Finland on my retirement. To mark the event and the occasion, he and Celestine John quietly authored, in my absence abroad, a moving article to mark my retirement, and got it published as a commentary in a respected medical journal¹. Talk

of being gracious, he had it. The gesture will remain with me for as long as I live.

I heard that he played the game of hockey quite competently. Unfortunately, I never had the privilege of seeing him wield the field hockey stick. To the immediate family members, I pray that you all be granted the fortitude to bear the loss.
30 January 2021.

Reference:

1. John CT, Okpani AOU. Commentary. Kelsey A Harrison. Forty years legacy in Tropical Obstetrics and Gynaecology. *African Journal of Reproductive Health* 2000, 4 (2):109 – 111.