

**THE HISTORY OF THE
FACULTY OF GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE,
NATIONAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL
COLLEGE OF NIGERIA
(1980 - 2005)**

By

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MB, BS, DPH, DCH, FMCGP, FWACP, PNMC, DFMC

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CONCEPTION, INCEPTION, EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT, THE FOUNDING FATHERS, FACILITATORS AND BENEFACTORS

*Paper Delivered By Dr Chief Abiola Olusegun Ajayi, First GMP Faculty Secretary, Second GMP Faculty Chairman, Past College President and Distinguished Fellow at the International Conference to Mark the 25th Anniversary of the GMP Faculty. NPMCN held at The Conference Centre, University of Ibadan
3rd - 5th November 2005.*

INTRODUCTION

25 years in the life of a faculty in a Postgraduate Medical College such as the Royal Colleges in the UK will ordinarily be considered a short period but in a relatively new faculty such as ours, 25 years, particularly the first 25 years, is a very long and most eventful time for the stakeholders, namely, the faculty fellows, officers, trainers, examiners and the residents.

While preparing this short historical account of our faculty, I was amazed at the number of land-mark events that have taken place and the number of our founding fathers who have passed on after playing important and memorable roles in the evolution of our faculty over the last quarter of a century.

I understand from the conference organizing committee that the purpose of calling for this paper is to enable the faculty know and place on record the authentic history of the Faculty of General Medical Practice from the few active foundation fellows left with

us while they still have the ability to recall reasonably accurately the facts of our faculty's history, evolution and development.

That is a very wise and timely decision. I feel highly honoured to have been invited to present the paper and it is my pleasure to oblige.

Preparing the paper has not been a difficult task because I have been involved right from the start and the faculty secretariat has kept a good record of correspondence and events.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

The early history of our faculty is closely linked with that of the Association of General Medical Practitioners of Nigeria as well as the Nigerian Medical and Dental Council.

In the early 1970s, quite a number of young doctors after their housemanship and varying periods of tutelage in public or private sectors opted to go into Private General Medical Practice on full time basis. Consequently a lot of new clinics and hospitals sprang up to meet the increasing demand for such services in many parts of the country especially the industrial and commercial centers.

At that time in Nigeria, if you were not a specialist surgeon, physician or gynecologist you were simply called a general practitioner and if you had the right connections you could eventually be made a fellow of the Nigerian Medical Council in General Medical Practice by that body. However, you were not accorded the appropriate professional status, regard and recognition by both the public and your specialist consultant colleagues.

A few young GPs practicing in Lagos who had decided to make a life time career in General Medical Practice got together and

resolved to do all they could to build the right image for the General Practitioner in Nigeria.

FORMATION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS OF NIGERIA (AGMPN)

The first step taken was to establish in 1976 an Association of General Medical Practitioners in order to create a platform by which the GPs would be recognized as a distinct professional body in the Nation's Healthcare delivery system. It was considered that through such a platform General Medical Practitioners could collectively negotiate and fight for their rights with their major clients, the commercial and industrial concerns, the Government, Government Agencies and Parastatals, the Nigerian Medical Association and the Nigerian Medical Council whenever the need arose.

The young GPs then made their desires known to their older colleagues who revealed that there was actually in existence an Association of General Medical Practitioners, but it was inactive. The elders were willing to absorb the young GPs into the Association with a mandate to revive it and the assurance of their moral as well as financial support.

Thereafter, an inaugural General Meeting of all known General Medical Practitioners in Lagos was convened. At the meeting, the Association's aims and objectives were clearly articulated and an Executive Committee was elected. Late Dr. Andem Ewa was elected the President, late Dr. Yinka Olumide the Vice-President while Dr. A. O. Ajayi was elected the General Secretary.

The revived Association went into action promptly and within a short time established an active National Secretariat in Lagos. It reached out to General Practitioners all over Nigeria and encouraged the formation of state branches of the Association.

Thus the Association was able to get into its membership such eminent General Practitioners as late Dr. S. E. Mbanefo and Dr. Azike from Onitsha, Dr. Mama from Kaduna, Dr. Elukpo and Dr. Oloruntoba from Ilorin.

THE BIRTH OF THE FACULTY OF GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE

Very prominent among the objectives of the newly revived Association was a Continuing Medical Education Programme for its members under the direction of an academic sub-committee.

This sub-committee organized regular monthly Sunday lunch-time lectures given by consultants in various specialties. The lectures took place at the Apapa Club and were very well attended.

At that time the Nigerian Medical and Dental Council administered the Postgraduate Medical Education Programme in Nigeria and from time to time conferred fellowship of the Medical Council in General Medical Practice on any doctor considered fit for such an award.

The AGPMN decided to protest this arbitrary mode of award of General Medical Practice fellowships by persons who were not even General Practitioners. It therefore sought an audience with the Chairman and the Registrar of the Medical Council to lodge a protest and request that the Association should be fully involved in the award of the council's fellowships in General Medical Practice.

The Medical Council was sympathetic to the AGPMN's protest and request. The Association was informed that the Council at

that time was in the process of establishing the Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria which was to have 14 faculties, one of which would be a Faculty of General Medical Practice. The Council further indicated that if the Association was willing to take over the responsibility for the proposed Faculty of General Medical Practice it should do three things;

- (a) Set up a sixteen-member General Medical Practice Faculty Board
- (b) Elect a chairman, secretary and a third member of the faculty to represent the GMP Faculty on the Governing Board and the Senate of the proposed Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria.
- (c) Prepare a syllabus, Vocational Training Scheme and Examination format for the Fellowship Programme in General Medical Practice. These were to be presented to the Senate of the College for consideration and approval.

FORMATION OF THE FIRST GMP FACULTY BOARD

Faced with such a great challenge the Association set up a GMP Faculty Board mainly from the members of its Continuing Medical Education Sub-committee, but including several members from the state branches.

Late Dr. Andem Ewa, the President of the Association of General Medical Practitioners of Nigeria was elected the first Faculty Chairman, Dr. A., O. Ajayi, the then AGMPN General Secretary was elected the Faculty Board Secretary while late Dr. S. E. Mbanefo was elected the third member of the Faculty on the College Senate.

Other members of the first GMP Faculty Board were late Dr. Yinka Olumide, late Dr. C. A. Pearson, late Dr. Salawu, late Dr.

Col. Bassey-Inyang, late Dr. M. O. Quadri, late Dr. M. A. Okunyade, late Dr. T. A. Oworu, Dr. C. Okojie, Dr. Chief Ogunlusi, Dr. A., Azike and Dr. T. E. Elukpo.

FIRST CONTACT WITH THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE OF ENGLAND

The Faculty was aware that there was a Royal College of General Medical Practice in England. In order to obtain an informed guidance in our task, we wrote to the President of that college informing him that we were in the process of setting up our faculty as a constituent part of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria and that we wanted him to enlighten us on how their own college was established.

We also intimated him of our desire to collaborate with the Royal College on various matters including training, attendance of our fellows at their courses as well as invitation of their fellows as external examiners in our Faculty's Fellowship examinations.

He very kindly replied promptly and sent several papers including the text of an annual college lecture on the history and development of their college.

He informed us that a certain Dr. Andrew Pearson, based in Wesley Guild Hospital Ilesha, Nigeria, had recently made a similar enquiry from the Royal College and advised us to get in touch with the doctor with a view to working together in setting up the proposed GMP Faculty.

We did so and subsequently got Dr. Pearson into our Faculty Board as a member, a special adviser and a potential Faculty Director of Training, a position we had decided was necessary in the Faculty since the Faculty Secretary could not possibly take on that job on a part time basis.

DRAWING UP THE GMP FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME CURRICULUM

In close collaboration with Dr. Pearson, the Faculty Board members drew up the syllabus for the Primary, Part I and Part II of the proposed Fellowship Programme having determined what type of Front Line Doctor/General Medical Practitioner was appropriate for a developing country like Nigeria.

The Faculty resolved that such a doctor needed to have an adequate level of knowledge and competence in surgery, medicine, obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics to be able to deal with routine uncomplicated cases that need not be referred to the tertiary centers.

Such a doctor must however recognize the limit of his ability and know when to refer cases for more expert care.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND FIRST LINK WITH THE FORD FOUNDATION

Before presenting the newly developed curriculum to the College Senate for approval, it was considered necessary to obtain input from General Medical Practice specialists from sister Postgraduate Medical Colleges in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. The Faculty believed that by doing this, its fellowship programme would get international recognition as well as local recognition and due respect from fellow specialists in the other Faculties of the West African and Nigerian Postgraduate Medical Colleges. An International Conference was therefore planned to take place at the Conference Centre of Ibadan University.

Funding was the greatest problem encountered. The Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria offered the faculty the

"grand sum" of Five Hundred Naira as financial assistance for the proposed International Conference. Approach to the ministries and other Government Agencies yielded no positive result. The Ford Foundation was therefore contacted for possible assistance. Fortunately we had a favourable response with a support funding of Five Thousand US Dollars as well as flight tickets for some of the international delegates invited to the conference.

With this support the International Conference was held in 1980.

The conference was declared open by the then Executive Governor of Oyo State, late Chief Bola Ige, SAN. Also in attendance at the opening ceremony were the Oyo State Commissioner of Health, Dr. Olu Alabi, the Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan, Prof. Kayode Oyediran, the Provost of the UCH, Prof. Wole Akande and General Practitioners from all over the country including doctors from several missionary hospitals which were potential training centers.

The conference was a huge success.

The final draft curriculum, which was fine-tuned at the conference, was thereafter presented to the College Senate for approval. It was given a unanimous approval.

The Faculty resolved that the curriculum be reviewed every five years. This has been done twice to date.

APPOINTMENT OF THE FIRST GMP FACULTY DIRECTOR OF TRAINING

It became necessary and urgent to appoint a Faculty Director of Training, who would scout round for trainers and training centers, organize courses and generally monitor and coordinate the GMP Fellowship Programme.

The College was unable to fund such a position from its meagre budgetary allocation. We therefore had to go to Ford Foundation again for further assistance. Once more we had a favourable response. We were given an initial grant of One Hundred and Fifty Thousand US Dollars to fund the following:

- (1) The appointment of a Faculty Director of Training
- (2) Accommodation and transport for the Director of Training
- (3) The establishment of a model training centre at the Baptist Hospital, Ogbomosho, under the direction of an American doctor specially invited from the USA by the Ford Foundation for that purpose.

We were thus able to appoint as our first full time Faculty Director of Training Dr. Andrew Pearson, who then had just finished his contract appointment with the Ibadan University Medical School (Ibarapa) Rural Health Outreach Project.

The grant was renewed in the same amount twice.

ELECTION OF GMP FACULTY FOUNDATION FELLOWS

Having set up the essential infrastructure, the faculty proceeded to elect its foundation fellows. The criteria for eligibility were:

- (a) Twelve years post qualification as a doctor
- (b) Five years experience as a General Medical Practitioner.

Altogether 152 foundation fellows were elected including all those who had earlier been awarded fellowships by the Nigerian Medical Council.

AWARD OF GMP FELLOWSHIP WITHOUT FULL EXAMINATION

After the election of the foundation fellows the faculty was besieged with requests from many doctors, both General Practitioners and specialists in private medical practice, for the award of its fellowship. However, in order to establish and sustain the desired respectability and value of the new GMP fellowship, it was decided that it should not be awarded anyhow to all comers.

From that time deserving General Medical Practitioners who met the criteria earlier set could only be awarded the fellowship on the presentation and successful defence of a dissertation to be assessed by the Faculty Examiners. Such dissertation must be on an approved clinical subject of the applicant's choice but prepared under the supervision of a GMP Faculty Board member.

Several members of the Association of General Medical Practitioners of Nigeria were opposed to this conditionality. They advocated the automatic award of the Faculty's fellowship to any General Practitioner who had been qualified for a period of twelve years. The Faculty rightly disagreed with them and maintained its stand.

The AGMPN consequently established its own Fellowship which it confers on its members annually but that Fellowship is not recognized by the Nigerian Medical and Dental Council or any body outside that Association.

That action by the AGMPN was most unfortunate as it diminished what should have been a natural close relationship between the GMP Faculty and the Association which in any case was also established by our Faculty's founding fathers.

In spite of this quite a number of senior doctors have been awarded their fellowships through the submission of dissertations.

AWARD OF GMP FELLOWSHIP BY EXAMINATIONS

Immediately after the fellowship syllabus was drawn up Faculty members were requested to contribute suitable MCQ and Essay-type questions with answers to the Faculty's Questions Bank.

In 1980, candidates were invited for the first primary examination of the faculty.

The response from young doctors who wanted to specialize in General Medical Practice was very encouraging and the pass rate compared favourably with the rest of the College.

The successful candidates easily secured training posts at the accredited training centers and the Part I Fellowship Programme started in earnest.

BOOK PACKS FOR RESIDENTS ORDERED FROM ENGLAND

Because of the prevailing poor economic state of the country at the inception of the Faculty relevant medical text books were scarce and very expensive locally. It was therefore decided that part of the Ford Foundation grant be used to purchase sets of about fifteen essential text books in bulk at specially negotiated reduced prices from suppliers in England directly. Every Resident doing the programme was given a pack of these books gratis. This step went a long way to relieve the early sets of Residents of the difficulties encountered in obtaining text books in Nigeria and obviously ensured their good pass rate in the examinations.

FIRST EXTERNAL EXAMINER INVITED FROM ENGLAND

In the late 1980s, it was the policy of the College to permit, in turn, some Faculties to invite external examiners from the Royal Colleges in the UK at college expense.

When the GMP Faculty was given this opportunity, the President of the Royal College of General Practice of England was invited as an external examiner. Unfortunately he was unable to come personally but he sent Professor Wright of Leeds University to represent him.

Professor Wright participated fully in the examinations and at the request of the then College President he gave an assessment of the quality of our examinations and the candidates presented. In his opinion our candidates were comparable with the top half or third of their own candidates in England. This was very encouraging.

The first fellow by examination in the GMP Faculty was Dr. Imediegwu.

THE GMP FACULTY NEWS SHEET, "THE FRONT LINE DOCTOR"

The faculty established a News sheet called the "Front Line Doctor" to keep both the Faculty Fellows and Residents informed of all faculty and college activities. It also contained some Continuing Medical Education materials for the benefit of all fellows and trainees. It was edited by the then Director of Training, Dr. Andrew Pearson. "The Front Line Doctor" has over the years increased in size and circulation. It has also improved in quality and the scope of the medical education materials covered.

YEAR ABROAD PROGRAMME

The GMP Faculty's Residents have benefited from this College Programme whenever funds were available. Official college visits to sister Colleges in England, Scotland and Canada secured for the College some paid training positions for Residents in General Medical Practice and other specialties. The current editor of "The Front Line Doctor", Dr. Mrs. J. O. Ajayi was a beneficiary of the Canadian offer.

DIRECT MEMBERSHIP OF WONCA FOR THE GMP FACULTY AND PERPETUAL FUNDING OF THE ATTENDANCE OF THE FACULTY'S PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AT WONCA CONFERENCES

Direct membership of WONCA was obtained for the GMP Faculty in place of its being an appendage of the AGMPN at WONCA conferences as was the situation earlier.

The College, at the request of the GMP Faculty, approved the establishment in Lloyds Bank of London a special term deposit account of Twenty-Five Thousand US Dollars from the Ford Foundation grant. The interest generated from the Deposit Account was to be used to fund in perpetuity the attendance at the WONCA conferences by the Faculty chairman, secretary and third Senate member.

BENEFACTORS OF THE GMP FACULTY

It is very important and appropriate to place on record the various individuals, institutions, organizations, Government Agencies and Foundations that have been GMP Faculty's benefactors.

1. THE ASSOCIATION OF GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS OF NIGERIA

The foresight of the AGMPN in making one of its foremost objectives a Continuing Medical Education Programme for its members and the setting up of an active academic sub-committee made it very easy to establish the GMP Faculty when the Nigerian Medical Council offered the Association the opportunity. The AGMPN provided free office and secretarial facilities for the GMP Faculty in the early years before it was given an office space in the College.

2. THE FORD FOUNDATION

The Ford Foundation gave the GMP Faculty two major financial grants without which there probably could not have emerged our faculty as early as it did and as financially buoyant and progressive as it is today.

3. THE NATIONAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF NIGERIA

Over the years successive administrations of the College have accorded our Faculty equal rights and privileges as the other Faculties. They have supported the faculty in its many innovations. Fellows of GMP Faculty have been elected into all the posts of principal officers of the College, namely College Treasurer, Vice-President and President of the College.

Our fellows have been given the highest honour of the college, namely the distinguished Fellowship of the College which was conferred on Dr. Chris Okojie in 2002 and Dr. A. O., Ajayi in 2004.

The College has also shown confidence in our fellows by appointing them to various college positions, namely,

Acting College Registrar: Dr. O. Sangowawa

Dr. Mrs. Kalejaiye

Deputy Registrar (Admin): Dr. Mrs. Kalejaiye

4. THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTICE, ENGLAND

This sister College provided us with several papers and publications which helped us substantially in setting up our Faculty and drawing up our Fellowship curriculum. It also provided funding for the first batch of our Residents' Log Books.

THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE GMP FACULTY

These are the many medical elders who, as founding fellows of the faculty, have since its inception served as officers as well as examiners.

It is obviously impossible to name all of them in this paper but one would not be appreciative enough of their contributions or be giving adequate honour to the memory of those of them, who have passed on, if one fails to mention a few.

(a) LATE DR. ANDEM EWA

He, it was who in 1976, graciously accepted to be the first National President of the revived Association of General Medical Practitioners of Nigeria, the body that established the GMP Faculty in 1979. For many years until his death, he was the Faculty's first Chairman.

In his memory and honour the Andem Ewa lecture series was established to be delivered at the Annual All Fellows Conference of the GMP Faculty.

(b) LATE DR. ANDREW PEARSON

He was the first expatriate doctor to be closely associated with our Faculty. He was introduced to us by the President of the Royal College of General Practice of England when we wrote for advice in setting up the faculty. He responded promptly and enthusiastically to our invitation to him to join forces with us to establish the Faculty.

He demonstrated total commitment to our cause and rendered enormous contributions to the nurturing of the new Faculty in many ways as our first Director of Training.

All of the younger fellows will recall the efforts of Dr. Pearson in encouraging and guiding our early sets of Residents and scouting for training centers and positions. Even after he and his amiable wife retired from service in Nigeria in 1986 to return to their home in Bury - St-Edmunds in Cambridgeshire, England, he continued to serve the Faculty by maintaining our link with the Royal Colleges and on the several occasions when our Faculty Delegations visited the United Kingdom he was an invaluable liaison between us and the various British Institutions visited.

(c) LATE DR. S. E. MBANEFO

He was our Faculty's "First Third Senate Member" and he later became the third GMP Faculty Board Chairman. He gave us tremendous support and guidance from his wealth of experience and knowledge. In spite of his advanced age he participated actively in all Faculty meetings and examinations. Unfortunately he passed on only a few

months after his election as Faculty chairman.

(d) HON. DR. CHRISTOPHER OKOJIE

Dr. Christopher Okojie, former Honourable Federal Minister of Health was one of the very senior colleagues who responded to our invitation to be a Foundation fellow and a member of the Faculty Board.

He participated actively in Faculty Board affairs and examinations of the Residents. He succeeded late Dr. Mbanefo as the fourth GMP Faculty Board Chairman.

During his tenure as the Honourable Federal Minister of Health, shortly after his Chairmanship of the Faculty, he allocated a whopping sum of Two million naira from the Federal Ministry of Health through the National Postgraduate Medical College to the GMP Faculty as an Endowment fund. This was to be kept in a fixed term deposit account, the interest from which was to be dedicated in perpetuity to funding the GMP Faculty's fellowship training programme.

(e) DR. O. SANGOWAWA

He succeeded Dr. Pearson in 1986 as the second full time GMP Faculty Director of Training and he was the first Director whose appointment was funded directly from the College's budget. Dr. Sangowawa performed the task of Director of Training creditably. He did as well as his predecessor. He also acted as College Registrar until his retirement in 1994.

**(f) H. E., LATE DR. SIR FRANCIS IBIAM, LATE
HON. DR. J.O.J. OKEZIE, LATE DR. EGBUONU
AND DR. AZIKE**

These four gentlemen and medical elders were very supportive. They attended the Faculty's Annual General Fellows' meetings from time to time. I recall with pride the occasion, when Dr. Sir Francis Ibiám, a former Governor of Eastern Nigeria and late Hon. Dr. J.O.J. Okezie a former parliamentarian turned up for our annual Faculty meeting and actually participated in the election of Faculty officers and members at 9, Sam Shonibare Street, Lagos which was then our Faculty's Secretariat. Dr. Azike was for a long time a member of the Faculty Board and an examiner. Dr. Egbuonu was until his recent demise the Faculty chairman.

The four of them assisted in raising awareness of the Faculty's existence and activities in the South Eastern Zone of the country.

**(g) DR. E.B. MAMA, DR. IBRAHIM DATTI AHMAD,
DR. T. ELUKPO, DR. OLORUNTOBA**

These doctors supported the Faculty in many ways and helped to raise awareness of the Faculty in the Northern States. Dr. Mama regularly attended our annual Fellows meetings and dinners. Drs. Elukpo and Oloruntoba were Faculty Board members and examiners. Dr. Oloruntoba was unanimously elected the first President of our sister organization, the Society of Family Physicians of Nigeria, (SOF PON) in 1998.

- (h) **LATE DR. T. ONA. ORUWARIYE, LATE DR. T. OWORU, DR. MRS. G. ADELEYE, DR. MRS. KALEJAIYE, DR. CHIEF OGUNLUSI, DR. LANI SHOGBETUN.**

These doctors, based in Ibadan, rendered tremendous help in advancing the Faculty's activities in the South West Zone of the country. Dr. Mrs. Adeleye rose to become the first female Faculty chairman. Dr. Mrs. Kalejaiye was for a long time a Faculty Board member and examiner. She was appointed Assistant College Registrar (Admin) and for a while until recently, acted as College Registrar.

- (i) **LATE DR. YINKA OLUMIDE, LATE DR. M.O. QUADRI, LATE DR. ONWUDIWE, LATE DR. M. A. OKUNYADE**

These were the Lagos-based doctors who in collaboration with late Dr. Adem Ewa and Dr. A. O. Ajayi ran the Lagos end of the Faculty's activities. Late Dr. Onwudiwe succeeded Dr. Ajayi as Faculty Secretary and Dr. Quadri succeeded him also as Faculty Secretary for a short while before the latter's demise.

All the afore-mentioned doctors and many others worked selflessly to establish the GMP. Faculty and nurture it to the enviable position it now occupies in the college.

I am sure that wherever they are today, these founding fathers will feel highly fulfilled and very proud of you, the products of their efforts. They will be pleased to note that the GMP Faculty now has over Thirty-Five accredited Training Institutions all over the country and is turning out many fellows in General Medical Practice who are

being appointed consultant specialists in both secondary and tertiary public and private medical centers. Even one of these fellows, Professor Victor Inem was recently appointed to the first Professorial Chair in General Medical Practice in Nigeria at the Delta State University.

Above all, they will be most delighted to note that their faculty is now being fully run and managed by the products of the training programme, which they commenced twenty-five years ago.

May the Almighty God grant those of them who have passed on eternal rest and peace,

Honourable Federal Minister of Health, Honourable Oyo State Commissioner of Health, Faculty Chairman, Faculty Officers, Fellow Fellows, invited guests, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, that is the history of the Faculty of General Medical Practice of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in its first quarter of a century.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

Greetings!

DR. CHIEF ABIOLA OLUSEGUN AJAYI
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