

Obituary

DAVID AKINWUNMI AKINTONDE MA, MB, CHB, BAO, DPH, JP 1923–1991

Dr David Akinwunmi Akintonde was born on 23 April 1923 (Easter Day) and died on 18 May 1991 (Pentecostal Day). He was the first widely known Nigerian leprologist and worked in the field for 30 years (1961–1990).

His education began at ONIPE in Oluyole Local Government, from where he moved to Ibadan Grammar School. He completed his secondary education at the Igbobi College, Lagos (1935–1940) where he passed his Cambridge School Leaving Certificate Examination with exemption from London Matriculation.

On 20 May 1944 he sailed (that was the only available means of transport to Europe in those days) to Trinity College, Dublin in the Republic of Ireland where he had already obtained admission to study medicine. He passed his examinations with credit, obtaining the following degrees: BA, MB, CHB and BAO. He later obtained an MA.

On his return to Nigeria, he served in the UCH Ibadan for a year as House Officer under Professor Jolly. He was employed by the Government of the Western Region of Nigeria and posted to Benin Province as the Medical Officer for the Ishan Division.

In 1960, Dr Akintonde returned to the United Kingdom for a course in Public Health, which he passed with distinction. On his arrival home in 1961 he was posted to his former zone as the chief Consultant Leprologist of the Western Region. When Bendel State was created in 1963 he was posted back to the Western Region and in 1975, when the Western Region was split into States, he moved to Ogun State where he was the Chief Consultant Leprologist until 1977, when he retired. His services were still very much needed by the two States Ogun and Oyo. He opted to serve in Oyo State as a contract officer until 1990.

In 1979 he was appointed a member of the committee on the prerogative of mercy by His Excellency, Governor Bola Ige of Oyo State. His experience was gratefully acknowledged by the Government of Oyo State by a decision in which medical opinion was paramount.

In 1981 he was appointed a Justice of the Peace.

Dr Akintonde was a devoted and painstaking pioneer leprologist. Being a pioneer was difficult but Papa (as we used to call him) took things in his stride. His leprosy publicity campaigns were very effective without being too flamboyant. His achievements at Ossiomo in the former Bendel state of Nigeria are still there for all to see. Then 'the vineyard was large but the labourers few'. His fatherly advice and motivation has greatly helped to increase the number of 'labourers'.

In a society where the stigma attached to leprosy is high, for him to have ventured into the field and remain there showing total commitment (even in retirement) for 30 years is no mean achievement. We are all aware that he left not only for reasons of health but also because he was able to get a devoted successor.

We grieve with his beloved wife, Mrs O Akintonde, a retired Director of Nursing services, and their four children and we take consolation in the fact that Papa was a guiding light to we younger leprologists and that to the last he obeyed the 'Golden Rule', i.e. 'Do unto others as you would want others to do unto you'.

T O MAJOROH