

*Editorial*

## **The Year 2024, Nigeria's Physiology Family and the Plethora of Exits**

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**Summary:** The Physiological Society of Nigeria mourns the loss, in the first half of the year 2024, of five distinguished members who left indelible marks and footprints in the sand of time. The contributions of Professors Chikodi Anigbogu (23 December 1953 – 2 January 2024); David Oyebola (1 October 1945 - 13 February 2024); Anthony Ebeigbe (22 August 1950 – 30 May 2024); Vincent Iyawe (14 April 1953 – 8 June 2024) and Olusoga Solofa (24 January 1947 – 10 June 2024) to the establishment and growth of the Physiological Society of Nigeria are well appreciated.

**Keywords:** *Tribute, Physiological Society of Nigeria, Nigerian physiologists, Anigbogu, Oyebola, Ebeigbe, Iyawe, Solofa*

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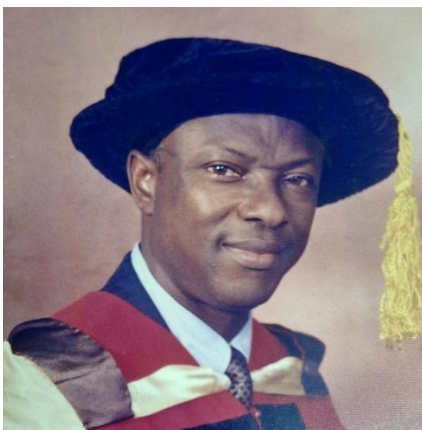
The Physiology family in Nigeria woke up on the first day of the year 2024 with traditional greetings and best wishes from many of her highly respected elders. One of the earliest messages I received came from Prof. Chikodi Nnanyelu Ezegwui Anigbogu, whose retirement from the University of Lagos was celebrated at a well-attended senate meeting on Thursday December 14, 2023. It was thus a great shock when the news of the death of Prof. Anigbogu was announced on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 2024. He had been a very strong pillar in the society since its establishment in 1978, having held positions such as Secretary general (1991 – 1994), Treasurer and International Liaison Officer of the society.

Born on December 23, 1953, in Enugu, Enugu State, Nigeria and being an alumnus of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria (B.Sc. Physiology class of 1979), 'Gbogus' as he was fondly called by his peers, obtained M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Lagos, Nigeria in 1983 and 1993 respectively. He

will be remembered for his love for the growth of the Physiological Society of Nigeria and his penchant for suggesting avenues for peaceful resolution of conflicts within the society. He supervised ten Ph.Ds, several M.Sc. and B.Sc students in his over 43 year career in the university system,

While still brooding on the unexpected loss of Prof Anigbogu, members of the Society gathered in Port Harcourt from Tuesday, February 13, 2024, to attend the 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Scientific meeting of PSN. The sad news of the death of one of the founding fathers of the society filtered in. Prof. David Dada Oyewusi Oyebola was reported to have died in the early hours of Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024 after a brief illness.

Prof. Oyebola attended the University of Ibadan medical school between 1965 and 1972. Throughout his undergraduate years, he enjoyed scholarship made on merit to outstanding candidates in each faculty in the concessional entrance examination to the University of Ibadan.



**Prof. C.N.E. Anigbogu, FPSN**  
23 December 1953 – 2 January 2024



**Prof. D.D.O. Oyebola, FPSN**  
1 October 1945 - 13 February 2024



**Prof. A.B. Ebeigbe, FPSN**  
22 August 1950 – 30 May 2024

As a result of his outstanding performance in the Part 1 MBBS examination in March 1968, he was invited to do an extra year for the intercalated B.Sc. Med. Sci. degree in Physiology and graduated with a first class Honours degree in the B.Sc programme in June 1969. He was also a part-time demonstrator in Physiology from 1968 to 1973. He eventually obtained the M.B.B.S degree in June, 1972.

Prof. Oyebola was a foremost teacher, mentor, former head of department of Physiology, University of Ibadan, former Dean, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, University of Ibadan, Foundation provost, College of Medicine, Ekiti State University, Foundation Editor of the Nigerian Journal of Physiological Sciences, former President of the Physiological Society of Nigeria and former Council member of International Union of Physiological Sciences. After teaching Physiology for 41 years, Prof. Oyebola retired from the University after a highly successful and meritorious service in September 2011. He was one of the first set of elected fellows of the Physiological Society of Nigeria in 2010. Prof. Oyebola, an esteemed scholar and prolific author, will be remembered for his hard work, passion and immense contribution to physiology education and practice.

One of the elders who attended the 41<sup>st</sup> PSN conference in Port Harcourt was Prof. Anthony Ebeigbe, a man who served the society with all his vigour. Except when not in the country, Prof Ebeigbe was known to be a sure attendee of PSN conferences, giving talks to encourage upcoming physiologists, offering counsels on issues requiring attention of the executive and relating with colleagues in a way that endeared him to all generations of physiologists. We left Port Harcourt with plans for him to be actively involved in the burial program of Prof. D.D.O. Oyebola, unknown to us that the Port Harcourt conference was going to be his last major outing. He fell ill soon after the conference and the news of his death on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024 was a rude shock to many of us.

Prof Ebeigbe was trained at Nigeria's premier University (University of Ibadan), graduating with a degree in Physiology in 1974. He was a foundation staff of University of Benin in 1975 as a Graduate Assistant and furthered his pursuit of a higher degree at the Institute of Physiology at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, from where he got a doctoral degree in 1980. He returned to Nigeria and rose through the ranks to become an Associate Professor of Physiology in 1984. In 1990, he was appointed Professor of Physiology at the Bendel/Edo State University (now Ambrose Alli University), Ekpoma. At Ekpoma, he was Dean, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences between 1991 and 1993. He later returned to base at the University of Benin as professor (by

appointment) in 1993. He was elected Provost, College of Health Sciences, University of Benin between 1993 and 1994. He also served as the acting Vice Chancellor of PAMO University of Medical Sciences, Port Harcourt, on its establishment in 2018.

Prof Ebeigbe had research exposures in several laboratories around the world. He was at the Physiology Department, University of Michigan Medical School, USA as a visiting Research Scientist and later as a Fulbright Scholar in 1982. In 1985, he was Research fellow at the Preclinical Research laboratories of Sandoz Ltd., Basel, Switzerland. Between 1987 and 2005, he was visiting Professor to Universities and Pharmaceutical companies in Brussels (Belgium), Basel (Switzerland), Glasgow (U.K), London (U.K) and Newcastle (U.K). In 2004 – 2005, he was Richard A. Bernstein distinguished Professor at the Department of Natural Sciences, University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, Maryland, U.S.A. Prof Ebeigbe was a recipient of many research grants and awards both within and outside Nigeria.

Tony, as he was fondly called, was the Society's National Secretary between 1983 and 1987. He became the second Editor-in-Chief of the Nigerian Journal of Physiological Sciences in 1987, a position he held till 2001, when he became the Vice President. He is thus the longest serving Editor-in-Chief of the Journal till date. During his tenure as editor, he exposed the Nigerian Journal of Physiological Sciences to several University libraries around the globe. He also laid the foundation for the Journal's inclusion in Medline and many other Indexing services. Prof Ebeigbe became the President, Physiological Society of Nigeria in 2005 at the Society's meeting in Port Harcourt and served in that capacity till 2010. He was until his death, a member of both the Board of Trustees (B.O.T) and also the Chairman of the Body of Fellows (B.O.F), of the Physiological Society of Nigeria. His exit will surely be missed but the indelible marks he left can never be erased.

The demise of Prof. Vincent Imagbovwon Iyawe's occurred a week after the death of Prof. Ebeigbe, on June 8, 2024. Prof. Iyawe had retired from the University of Benin in April 2023 having served the University for over 40 years.

Vincent Iyawe was admitted to read pharmacology at the University of Ibadan in 1972 but left after a year to pursue a career in medicine and surgery at the University of Benin. Where he graduated in 1978. Before and after his retirement, Prof Iyawe occupied several key administrative positions at the University of Benin and Benson Idahosa University. He was Provost, of the College of Medical Sciences, University of Benin, and until his death Provost of the College of Medical Sciences at the Benson Idahosa University and Bishop at the Church of God Mission.

In addition to the above positions, he was a member of the Governing Councils of the University of Benin and Ambrose Alli University; a member of the Board of Management of the University of Benin Teaching Hospital and Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital.



**Prof. Vincent Iyawe, FPSN**  
(14 April 1953 – 8 June 2024)



**Prof. Olusoga Adekunle Sofola, FPSN**  
(24 January 1947 – 10 June 2024)

The last of the exits recorded in June 2024 was that of another founding member of the Physiological Society of Nigeria, Prof. Olusoga Sofola, who until death was an emeritus professor of Physiology at the University of Lagos. Prof. Sofola was an embodiment of leadership and a great mentor to many who had the opportunity of knowing him. He was a gentle elder who listened to younger colleagues, always willing to help build the research potential of younger physiologists. Through his magnanimity, many young scientists benefitted from his collaborative prowess in research and enjoyed several academic exchange programmes in laboratories of his colleagues within and outside Africa.

Olusoga Adekunle Sofola was born in Lagos on 24th January 1947 and obtained BSc, MSc and MBBS degrees from the College of Medicine, University of Lagos and PhD at the Department of Cardiovascular Studies, University of Leeds, where he was a British

Heart Foundation fellow. He began a long teaching and professional career at the College of Medicine, University of Lagos in 1973, where he was Head of Department for many years and supervised many reputable physiologists who are promoting the subject of Physiology all over the world today. He also taught in many other countries, including United Arab Emirates, Centre for Cardiovascular Diseases, Texas Southern University, Houston, the also the United Kingdom.

He had significant appointments in his remarkable lifetime including the Provost of the College of Medicine of the University Lagos (CMUL) (1993 - 1996), Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academics), University of Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria (2003 - 2007). In 2009, he was appointed as Vice-Chancellor of Olabisi Onabanjo University (OOU), Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria. He was also the Vice Chancellor, Eko University of Medical Sciences, Lagos.

Professor Sofola was a founding member and a Fellow of the Physiological Society of Nigeria. He was a past President of Association of African Physiological Sciences, AAPS and a member of Council of the International Union of Physiological Sciences (IUPS). He was also a Fellow and former Treasurer of Nigerian Academy of Science. It is on record that Prof. Sofola was a major facilitator of the hosting of the International Union of Physiological Sciences (IUPS) Education workshop which was held jointly with the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Scientific Conference of the Physiological society of Nigeria at the Sheraton Hotel, Lagos, Nigeria between October 20 and 23, 2014. He was a guest speaker at the IUPS congress in Birmingham, UK, in 2013. He delivered by Olusoga Sofola titled 'Physiology: The laboratory, the Hospital and Society' at the 30<sup>th</sup> PSN conference on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2014. On Friday, 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018, he delivered the Horatio Oritsejomi Thomas Distinguished Fellowship Lecture with the title "Improvement in Patient Care Through Basic & Clinical Research: Whither Nigeria" at the Trenchard Hall, University of Ibadan.

Prof Sofola once identified the description and elucidation of the mechanisms of the cardiovascular responses in an experimental tetanus model as a major highlight of his research career. Also, alongside his colleagues at Leeds, he was able to report the switch/change in blood vessel / vascular endothelial function during salt loading in which they were the first to demonstrate that the vascular endothelium can use other molecular channels to respond during salt loading.

Although Professor Soga Sofola's sojourn in the land of the living has ended, majority of us who had the privilege of knowing him agree that his years on earth were extremely impactful.