

Professor Adetokunbo Lucas, Nigeria and Professor George Kamy, Uganda

Africa has lost two members of a distinguished generation of African health leaders who played a pivotal role in taking over leadership for health from colonial expatriates. These are Professor Adetokunbo Lucas from Nigeria who passed away on 25 December 2020 in Ibadan, and Professor George Kamy from Uganda who died on 4 November 2020 in Kampala.

As African countries gained independence from colonial rule there was the question of whether the high academic and professional standards that had been established at centers such as Makerere and Ibadan Medical Schools could be maintained by local professionals. It is the likes of Professors Lucas and Kamy, among others, who demonstrated that African professionals were equal to the task of maintaining and improving the standards. They were the role models emulated by up and coming leaders and students of which I was privileged to be among them.

Ade Lucas, born in 1931 in Lagos, Nigeria and attended Kings College, Lagos secondary school in the same class with two other illustrious health leaders:



Victor Ngu, a pioneer Professor of Surgery, and Professor Monekosso, past Regional Director, WHO African Region and Minister of Health in Cameroon. Lucas graduated in medicine at Durham University, England, in 1956 and later specialised in internal medicine and public health.

He broke the glass ceiling several times as the first African Professor of Internal medicine and Public Health at Ibadan and the founding Director the Tropical Diseases Research Program of WHO and World Bank. He developed a passion for maternal and child health and with characteristic humour authored a monograph about 'choosing your mother carefully' if you plan to survive infant mortality. He was Professor of International Health at Harvard where he ran the first Health Ministers course. He served on multiple committees for national and international organisations including the Rockefeller Foundation, the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, the Carter Center and the Wellcome Trust.

While his reputation had preceded him, I first got to work closely with Professor Lucas during the early days (2002-2005) of implementing the Global Fund to fight Aids TB and Malaria in Geneva where he was the focal point for the countries from Western and Central Africa while I was the focal point for countries in Eastern and Southern Africa. I was immediately impressed by his hu-

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mility, breadth of grasp and sense of humor. We had to compare notes frequently so as to speak as one African voice at board meetings, and we became friends. He encouraged me to launch the African Center for Global Health and Social Transformation (ACHEST) and he agreed to serve on its initial board of directors, traveling to Kampala several times to attend board meetings.

Turning now to George Kamy, born on 12 May, 1925 in Mbarara, Uganda, he attended secondary school at another Kings College, Budo in Uganda, graduated from Makerere Medical School in 1954 and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburg in 1963.



Kamy had tremendous influence in the health sector in Uganda and East Africa. He was the first Ugandan specialist surgeon at the Mbale Regional Referral Hospital in Eastern Uganda where he remodelled and enlarged the operating theatre, taught Clinical Officers and introduced Physiotherapy. He was promoted to Senior Consultant Surgeon and transferred to Mulago Hospital, Kampala where he was also honorary lecturer at Makerere Medical School in 1968. Makerere was then the only Medical School in East Africa with students from Kenya, Tanzania and other countries. A major preoccupation of the early African doctors in East Africa was to push for recognition of their medical qualification so that they could enjoy the same conditions of service as expatriate doctors. Kamy was among those who fought for this recognition which came two years after independence in 1964 when the Makerere Medical qualification was lifted retrospectively from a Licentiate to degree level.

One of his most enduring legacies is the role of founding Chairperson of the Uganda Health Services Commission with a mandate to interview and recommend candidates for appointment to senior positions in the Ministry of Health and Regional Referral Hospitals. I was privileged to be the first person whom his Commission interviewed for appointment as the first Director General of Health Services. I knew him personally as a final-year medical student and later worked together very well as DGHS. We were all impressed by his gentleness, straight forwardness, cool, deep voice and spotless cleanliness. He served in leadership roles on multiple committees of Surgeons, Uganda Medical Association and Ministry of Health.

This generation of African health leaders, exemplified by Ade Lucas and George Kamy, are a source of pride for Africa and the world.