

# David Olufemi Olaleye

Georgina Njideka Odaibo remembers a great virologist, excellent mentor and an academic giant

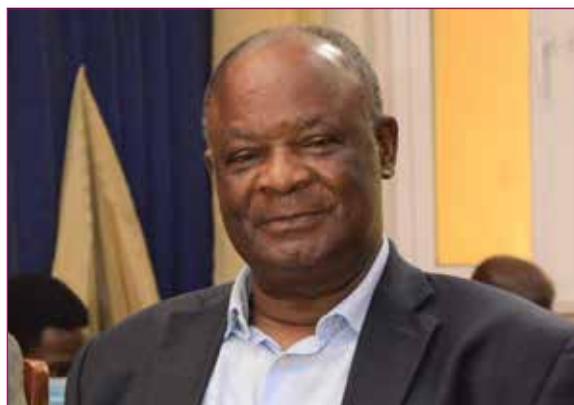
The death of Professor Olufemi David Olaleye of the Department of Virology, University of Ibadan, in the early hours of Tuesday 27 July 2021 came as a rude shock to the university and the wider scientific community. He was a great man who impacted many lives, both old and young. He was an excellent teacher and mentor, a father to many, defender of the oppressed, a forthright person who would stand for the truth even when every other person was against him. He was a researcher par excellence, highly knowledgeable, brilliant, intelligent and an epitome of humility.

Professor David Olufemi Olaleye, was born on 21 July 1954 in Ogbomosho, Oyo State, Nigeria, obtained the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree in 1981, Masters Vet Science (Diagnostic pathology) in 1983 and PhD Virology in 1991, all from the University of Ibadan. He began serving the university in 1982 as Resident Veterinary Officer (Pathology). His journey as a virologist started when he was appointed a Lecturer in the Department of Virology, College of Medicine in 1986, and he rose through the ranks to the post of Professor of Virology in 1995.

He would become one of the longest-serving professors in the university, a keeper of its history and memories, and contributed a great deal in this capacity.

Professor Olaleye served the University of Ibadan and Nigeria in various capacities. He was four times Head of Department of Virology; Dean of the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences; Member, Presidential Committee on Claim of Cure for AIDS; Member, Presidential Committee on Avian Influenza outbreak; Member, National HIV Surveillance Committee and member, Oyo state COVID-19 task force, just to mention a few. Until his death he was also an Adjunct Professor, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, USA; one of the founding members of the African Forum for Research and Education In Health (AFREhealth), a fellow of the African Academy of Science, a member of many national and international scientific and professional bodies, including the American Science Honors Society (Sigma Xi), the International Aids Society, the World Virology Congress, the Nigeria Veterinary Medical Association, the International Society for Infectious Diseases, the National Geographic Society (USA), the American Society for Microbiology, and the African Society for Laboratory Medicine.

One of Professor Olaleye's research breakthroughs on HIV was the first isolation and characterisation of the 2nd HIV recombinant form (CRF02 during his Fogarty Interna-



tional Research Fellowship programme at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, USA (1990-1992). This virus strain that he named IbNg (for Ibadan Nigeria) has been shown to be the predominant strain circulating in West Africa and a good candidate for development of vaccine in the region. Professor Olaleye was Principal (PI) and Co-PI of many grants including the NIH-supported Medical Education Partnership Initiative in Nigeria grant (MEPIN), a grant for capacity development in six Nigeria universities (2010-2017) and the University of Ibadan MEPI Capacity Development Training for Junior Faculty (2015-2021). He had over 250 articles published in peer reviewed journals. Professor Olaleye was a Fellow of the Fogarty International Fellowship Program, at the University of California, Los Angeles, a DAAD and AvH Fellow (Germany), a Research Fellow at NIH and had several short-term research visits to the United States and Germany. He was a world figure in communicable diseases, including HIV and AIDS, Ebola and COVID-19. He championed the activities that controlled these diseases in various significant ways.

Over the past twelve years his efforts were focused on developing research capacity among junior faculty at the Universities in Nigeria. With grants from the NIH, he spearheaded training on research capacity development for faculty and postgraduate students (PhD and resident doctors) in six universities in the country. During his tenure as Dean of the Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, he established a faculty conference, Unilbadan Conference of Biomedical Research (UCBR), and one of its objectives was to create a platform for young scientist within the country to show case their work, learn new ideas and establish networks.

Professor David Olufemi Olaleye will be sorely missed by all who encountered him, for there was never a dull moment with him.

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