**HISTORY OF MISSION MEDICAL AND HEALTH MINISTRY IN NIGERIA**

The evolution of medical and health services in Nigeria is deeply intertwined with the contributions of various Missionary Organizations across the Federation. While the roots of modern healthcare in Nigeria trace back to exogenous origins, indigenous traditional medicine practitioners such as the "Wombai" and "Gozan" in the north and the "Babalawo" and "dibia" in the south provided early forms of medical care.

Notable milestones in the history of medical services in Nigeria include the efforts of early explorers like Mungo Park and Dr. William Balfour Baikie, who introduced health services during their expeditions. Furthermore, the significant role played by colonial governors like Sir William Macgregor, a medical doctor, in improving sanitary services in Lagos cannot be overstated.

Credit must be given to the pioneering work of missionary bodies, particularly the Baptist Mission, in establishing organized medical care in Nigeria. They were instrumental in introducing modern medical practices to the region. The Catholic Mission also played a crucial role, establishing the first hospital in Nigeria in Abeokuta in 1895.

The Methodist Mission and other missionary organizations contributed to the expansion of medical and church work across different regions of Nigeria. Thomas Bowen of the Baptist Mission arrived in Badagry in the 1840s, laying the foundation for the first major Baptist Hospital in Ogbomosho.

Despite setbacks, including the American Civil War, missionary medical and church work continued to expand. The appointment of medical professionals like Dr. George Green in 1906 marked a significant milestone in healthcare provision. The construction of hospitals, including the Shaki Baptist Hospital, further enhanced healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria.

As we reflect on this rich history, we recognize the profound impact of missionary organizations in laying the foundation for modern medical and health services in Nigeria. Their commitment to the values of Healing, Teaching, and Preaching continues to inspire us as we strive to uphold the legacy of compassionate care and service excellence at Baptist Medical Centre, Saki.

**BEGINNING OF BAPTIST MEDICAL MINISTRY IN SAKI**

***Origins of Baptist Medical Ministry in Saki***

Saki, once a predominantly pagan society, witnessed the dawn of Christianity in the early 20th century. In 1855, Mr. W. H. Clarke explored the possibility of missionary work in Saki, laying the groundwork for future endeavors. The arrival of Rev. Duval in 1901 marked the introduction of Christianity to Saki, followed by the establishment of a preaching station at Okeboji in 1902.

In 1906-1908, Rev. E. G. MacLean introduced education to Saki, initially focusing on vocational training. Over time, this evolved into a training college for pastors, laying the foundation for educational institutions like the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ogbomoso and Baptist College in Iwo.

The expansion of missionary work led to the establishment of Elam Girls School in 1933, attracting converts who were educated and trained by missionaries. As the population grew, the need for a hospital became evident, prompting the arrival of trained missionary nurses like Miss Amanda Tinkle in 1939.

Miss Tinkle's arrival heralded a new era of prayer and dedication, culminating in the eventual establishment of Baptist Hospital in Saki. Despite challenges and setbacks, including the Nigerian civil war, the hospital continued to serve the community, providing essential medical care.

In 1951, construction of the present Baptist Hospital commenced, with the dedication and selfless service of missionaries and Nigerian staff driving its development. By May 1952, the hospital was formally opened, marking a significant milestone in healthcare provision in Saki.

**Legacy of Selfless Service**

The early years of Baptist Medical Ministry in Saki were characterized by courage, commitment, and unwavering faith. Missionaries like Miss Amanda Tinkle and Dr. Mrs. Richardson worked tirelessly, often under challenging conditions, to fulfill the mission of healing, teaching, and preaching.

Their dedication laid the foundation for the hospital's growth and expansion, reaching communities across Oke-Ogun and Kwara State. Despite the departure of missionary personnel during the civil war, the hospital continued to serve, aided by Nigerian staff and government support.

Through prayer and perseverance, Baptist Hospital in Saki became a beacon of hope and healing, leaving a lasting legacy of compassionate care and service excellence. Today, we honor the memory of those who dedicated their lives to this noble cause, inspiring us to continue their mission of serving humanity with love and compassion.

**GROWTH OF BAPTIST MEDICAL MINISTRY IN OKE-OGUN**

**Continued Dedication and Expansion**

The growth of Baptist Medical Ministry in Oke-Ogun was propelled by the unwavering dedication of individuals like Miss Frances Hammett and Miss Amanda Tinkle, who arrived in Saki in 1944 and 1939 respectively. Miss Hammett, supported by the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, played a crucial role in the development of the hospital, working tirelessly across various departments and even administering anesthesia when necessary.

Despite the absence of a chaplain at the hospital for many years, nurses and missionary doctors like Miss Tinkle felt a deep sense of responsibility towards spiritual care. They engaged in patient visits and implemented teaching programs for both outpatients and inpatients, striving to provide holistic care to all.

The arrival of Revd & Dr. Mrs. Richardson in 1945 marked a significant milestone in the hospital's history. Reverend Richardson's unwavering support, especially in patient transportation to Ogbomosho Hospital, further strengthened the medical ministry in Saki. Miss Tinkle, who worked closely with Dr. Richardson, fondly remembers their collaboration and the invaluable contributions they made to the hospital.

Chief Dr. V.O. Fatunla FRCS, who served as Chief Medical Director from April 1970 to December 1997, played a pivotal role in the continued growth and development of the hospital. Under his leadership, Baptist Medical Ministry in Oke-Ogun expanded its services and reached more communities, leaving a lasting impact on healthcare delivery in the region.

**Legacy of Service and Commitment**

The legacy of Baptist Medical Ministry in Oke-Ogun is a testament to the dedication and selflessness of its pioneers and leaders. Their unwavering commitment to providing compassionate care, coupled with their tireless efforts to expand healthcare services, has left an indelible mark on the community.

As we reflect on their contributions, we honor their memory and pledge to continue their legacy of service and commitment to excellence. At Baptist Medical Centre, Saki, we remain steadfast in our mission to provide quality healthcare to all, guided by the values of Healing, Teaching, and Preaching.

**TRANSITION TO INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP**

**Empowerment and Growth**

Following the departure of missionary doctors and nurses during the Nigerian Civil War, Mr. T. A. Ogunjimi, a Nurse, assumed leadership at the centre. However, patient care faced challenges, with surgical cases requiring transportation to Ogbomoso Baptist Hospital.

In April 1970, Late Chief Dr. Victor Olubi Fatunla FRCS became the first indigenous Missionary Medical Director, heralding a new era of growth and transformation. Under his visionary leadership, the hospital expanded from a 40-bed facility to a 200-bed hospital, becoming the premier referral center in Oke-Ogun.

Chief Dr. Fatunla's tenure saw remarkable advancements, with the hospital's services rivalling those of teaching hospitals nationwide. His commitment to excellence led to his appointment as an Associate Professor at University College Hospital, Ibadan, where he imparted surgical knowledge to future generations.

Successive leaders, including Chief Dr. T. O. Ojebode FWACP FM and Prince Dr. O.S. Adekanye, continued the legacy of excellence, overseeing the establishment of various healthcare and educational facilities. Today, Baptist Medical Centre boasts a comprehensive range of services and training programmes, catering to the diverse needs of the community.

**Expanding Horizons**

The centre's facilities now include Baptist School of Nursing, Baptist School of Midwifery, Baptist School of Medical Laboratory Technology, and Baptist Medical Centre Secondary School, among others. Clinical services encompass internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics & gynecology, pediatrics, and general practice, supported by state-of-the-art diagnostic and therapeutic technologies.

Training programmes, such as Family Physician Training and House Officers Training, ensure a skilled workforce capable of delivering high-quality care. The staff strength has grown significantly over the years, reflecting the centre's commitment to capacity building and service excellence.

*Under the stewardship of visionary leaders, Baptist Medical Centre continues to evolve, poised for even greater achievements in healthcare delivery and medical education. As we look to the future, our commitment to healing, teaching, and preaching remains unwavering, driving us to new heights of excellence and service to humanity.*

**BAPTIST MEDICAL CENTRE, SAKI RURAL HEALTH PROGRAMME**

***Baptist Hospital, Okuta, Kwara State, Nigeria***

The Baptist Hospital Okuta, initially founded as a dispensary in 1963, was later transferred to the management of Baptist Medical Centre, Saki in 1980. Under Chief Dr. V. O. Fatunla's leadership, the hospital underwent significant expansion and improvement. Despite financial challenges, Baptist Medical Centre, Saki provided staffing, equipment, and financial support to ensure the hospital's viability. In 2000, management of the hospital was transferred to the Kwara Baptist Conference, with Baptist Medical Centre, Saki maintaining a referral role.

***Baptist Welfare Clinic, Ilero***

Established in April 1985 as an annex of Baptist Medical Centre, Saki, the Baptist Welfare Clinic in Ilero provided primary and secondary care services to patients from the area. Supported by Baptist Medical Centre, Saki in terms of staffing, equipment, and financing, the clinic played a vital role in meeting the healthcare needs of the community. It gained autonomy in March 2000 while still maintaining a referral relationship with Baptist Medical Centre, Saki.

***Baptist Welfare Clinic, Okeho***

Following discussions initiated by Chief Dr. V. O. Fatunla, the Baptist Welfare Clinic in Okeho was established in July 1986. Like its counterpart in Ilero, the clinic operated as an annex of Baptist Medical Centre, Saki, with Baptist Medical Centre providing support in terms of facilities, staffing, and financing. The clinic achieved autonomy in December 2003, with Baptist Medical Centre, Saki facilitating the transition.

***Baptist Health Centre Okaka***

Founded by Baptist Medical Centre, Saki in August 1990, the Baptist Health Centre Okaka aimed to provide healthcare services to the local community. However, due to various challenges, including low patronage and the encroachment of quacks, the centre ceased operations.

***Baptist Health Centre Gbaabe***

Established in February 1987 by Baptist Medical Centre, Saki, the Baptist Health Centre Gbaabe initially served the community effectively. However, over time, the centre faced a decline in patronage and became defunct. Despite this, Chief Dr. V. O. Fatunla's philanthropic efforts impacted the lives of orphans adopted by the hospital, providing them with opportunities for professional growth and development.

*Through its rural health programme, Baptist Medical Centre, Saki, has made significant contributions to healthcare delivery in the region, extending its healing ministry to underserved communities and fostering community development.*

**TRAINING INSTITUTIONS**

**Postgraduate Training**

- Postgraduate training under the West African College of Physicians commenced in 1976, followed by the National Postgraduate Medical College in 1980. These programs were initiated through the efforts of Chief Dr. V. O. Fatunla, the first indigenous Medical Director. The centre has produced numerous consultants in Family Medicine since the inception of these programs.

**School of Midwifery**

- The School of Basic Midwifery at Baptist Medical Centre, Saki was established in March 1980. It transitioned to offering full post-basic training in 1991, with the basic midwifery program phased out in September 1992. The school has maintained a significant student enrollment, with notable expansions and achievements over the years.

**Baptist School of Basic and Post Basic Nursing**

- The Baptist School of Nursing, Saki was established in 1992, with post-basic nursing introduced in 2018. It aims to train God-fearing Christian nurses who meet the requirements for the award of Registered Nurses Certificate as stipulated by the Nursing & Midwifery Council of Nigeria. The school actively participates in various local, state, and national activities, including educational competitions and healthcare initiatives.

**School of Medical Laboratory Technology**

- Established in August 2006 to address the shortage of middle-level Medical Laboratory Science Personnel in Oke-Ogun Area, the school aims to train proficient Medical Laboratory Technicians. It offers a 36-month training program, culminating in qualification as a Medical Laboratory Technician after success in the Medical Laboratory Science Council of Nigeria qualifying examination. The school has graduated a significant number of students and maintains collaborations with key healthcare establishments.

*Through these training institutions, Baptist Medical Centre, Saki has played a crucial role in addressing healthcare workforce needs, providing quality education and training to healthcare professionals, and contributing to the overall improvement of healthcare delivery in the region.*