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Short Communication

Building a Case for Developing a Career Path for Graduate Prosectors of Anatomy in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The reality of a dwindling era of abundance of cadavers is beginning to stare at all of us as anatomists in Nigeria. This is an era where the spirit of prosection needs a rebirth; an era complexed with the growing need for plastination; an era faced with an unprecedented increase in the number of Science graduates of Anatomy who obviously, may not be completely accommodated in the academic cadre. These factors have together, triggered the need for a balance; a balance that will inspire graduates outside “the career/job horizon of Anatomy” to key into fading business of artistic prosection; a balance that can create a distinct career path where graduate prosectors grow in a cadre separate from those of conventional technologists. By that, the artistic spirit of prosection is rejuvenated and married with the modernism of plastination, and a wider horizon for job creation is established in the already existing thinned world of opportunities for graduate Anatomists; One which was caused by the training exigencies of yesteryears. This paper tries to develop a career path for these Science graduates in Anatomy- one that needs an urgent consideration in the council of Anatomists in Nigeria.

Keywords: Prosectors, Prosection, Anatomy, Career, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the number of Institutions that have established BSc programs in Anatomy has increased tremendously thereby, mounting more pressure on the demand for Cadavers without a corresponding increase in the available career prospects for the discipline- an aftermath of a hitherto thinned curriculum that have revolved around these core science trainees being trained to train medical students. In line with these situations are numerous calls for curriculum expansion and an adjustment in tune with modernism. These calls have rippled the questions of the capacity of our trainees to fit into the tune of modernism. One associated by the quest to manage the little supply of cadavers by plastination and modern prosection; one associated with academic and research oriented professional diversification and one associated with widening the specialty base of this boundless discipline called Anatomy.

As a result, there is an apodictic need to develop enduring career paths for graduates of Anatomy to encourage self-sustainability and ethico-professional satisfaction. In line with this, we have designed a career path in **Anatomical prosection in Labs**- A path that will bring huge dividends in the professional diversification of prospects and personal satisfaction;

: One in tune with the necessities of the growing
: boundless discipline of Anatomy. This presentation has
: tried to exhaustively give a background to the thinned
: career prospects in Anatomy in Nigeria while creating
: relatively, a possible solution in the path of prosection
: vis-a-viz other propositions, for our teaming graduates
: who were born, mostly, out of a program of thinned
: philosophy.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

: The history of prosection dates back to the study of
: Anatomy. In the Royal College of Surgeons, U.K, were
: found Anatomists- those with or without medical
: degrees, functioning effectively in the Gross Anatomy
: laboratories as prosectors; dissecting and marking
: different segments of the human cadaver. These
: segments were specially preserved and used
: continuously in the art of demonstrating Gross
: Anatomy to medical and allied medical students. In
: Nigeria, such prosected specimens are dazed by dearth
: and previously developed specimens have been
: overused leading to an overuse syndrome that has
: depreciated their importance in learning. After the
: death of Mr. Festus Okpa, a prosector trained in the
: Royal College of Surgeons and whose works on the
: human hand are still preserved at the Royal College of
: Surgeons, no other indigenous prosector has sustained

that spirit. As such, our knowledge of prosection is becoming a skill of the past; an art in history; an art on the verge of kicking the bowl. Some of us don't even know what prosection means.

According to Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary – an encyclopaedia edition (2013), to prosect simply means to dissect for purposes of Anatomical demonstration and instructions. Also, according to the free encyclopaedia called Wikipaedia, A **prosector** is a person with the special task of preparing a dissection for demonstration, usually in medical schools or hospitals. It went further to say that many important anatomists began their careers as prosectors working for lecturers and demonstrators in anatomy and pathology. The act of prosecting differs from that of dissecting. A prosection is a professionally prepared dissection prepared by a prosector – a person who is well versed in anatomy and who therefore prepares a specimen so that others may study and learn anatomy from it. A dissection is prepared by a student who is dissecting the specimen for the purpose of learning more about the anatomical structures pertaining to that specimen. The term dissection may also be used to describe the act of cutting. Therefore, a prosector dissects to prepare a prosection. Prosectors are also involved in autopsies in Pathology laboratories. And in fact, Prosectors were synonymous to Anatomists.

Therefore in our simple terms, a Prosector is an Anatomist who prosects for ease of illustration, visual and mental appreciation and long term retention of Anatomical structures. This class of Anatomists is almost becoming extinct in our environment. And even the art of prosection is not known in most institutions and some Anatomy departments. Thus Anatomical museums are becoming myths for our young students.

THE CASE IN QUESTION

The questions are:

How do we revitalize that dying art of Prosection in our country Nigeria? How do we incorporate modernism into revitalizing the process of prosection? Having seen the unprecedented increase in the number of graduate trainees in Anatomy, can we take advantage of this number to create a channel for training in the art of prosection and thereby creating job opportunities for the trainees? Also having observed the gross decline in the availability of cadavers, it is important to have a network and hierarchy of prosectors in all Anatomy departments to enable incorporation of modern arts of plastination into gross anatomy laboratories. This will be done through well trained prosectors.

Also, in line with the growing n0 of graduate trainees in Anatomy, a clear diversification of the technical cadre will suffice. Creating a cadre totally different from the conventional technologists and establishing a cadre for graduate prosectors. These Prosectors, in addition to building sustainable Museum of Anatomical specimens, can have the capacity to take active part in

various departmental research programs and training; they can even embark on post-graduate studies in various aspects of Anatomy but will definitely have a different service cadre from Technologists and Lecturers.

The proposed Cadre system for graduate Prosectors include:

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|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Prosector III | - |
| CONTISS 7 (Entry level) | |
| 2. Prosector II | - |
| CONTISS 8 | |
| 3. Prosector I | - |
| CONTISS 9 | |
| 4. Senior Prosector | - |
| CONTISS 10 | |
| 5. Principal Prosector | - |
| CONTISS 11 | |
| 6. Assistant Chief Prosector | - |
| CONTISS 12 | |
| 7. Chief Prosector | - |
| CONTISS 13 | |

Each level will grow according to normal civil/public service rules and promotions will be in every three years in line with prosectorial and academic performance. We will suggest that at each grade level, they should be assessed based on the number of prosected specimen. The Chief Prosector will direct and give responsibilities to the others in the lower grade levels. Regular training on modern techniques in prosection will be encouraged for all grade levels.

NOTE: This arrangement should exist differently from the current conventional cadre of technologists who will be involved in processing and preserving cadavers and bones.

The above proposal will alleviate the burden of “where do find ourselves?”- a question frequently asked by young graduates. In addition it will infuse extra quality to the training of Anatomists in Nigeria. The prosectors must not confine themselves to the human cadavers. A painstaking assessment of other non-human primates; Mammals; Aves and Reptiles should be incorporated into comparative prosection. This will widen their knowledge horizon and expand the precepts of 'Structure'. And before you file a report, scholars in the biological sciences will be coming to Anatomy Labs for training.

Secondly, there is a significant invasion of our histology Laboratories by Medical Laboratory Scientists who claim that Anatomists are not qualified to man these labs. It is as a result of the thinned curriculum of the past that has given them the impetus to drive us away from our homes. We should desire to equip these teaming soldiers of young graduates with the ability to take over our histology and gross labs. We propose that an establishment of an **INSTITUTE OF ANATOMICAL SCIENCES** that will be controlled

by a Council. In this institute, our student trainees will be certificated. Another possible name of the institute is INSTITUTE OF HUMAN BIOLOGY SCIENCES. This will ensure that the business of Anatomy is professionalized; the management of our laboratories will be professionalized; all practicing Morticians will be certified Anatomists and all morgues will not function without the license of a certified Anatomists; All Anatomical model producing companies will not function without certified Anatomists well versed in Anatomical arts and illustrations; And as many other workplaces we can think of. The possible areas of certification shall include:

1. Mortuary Science
2. Anatomical Illustration and modelling
3. Histological and histochemical Sciences
4. Anatomical aspects of forensic science and biometrics
5. Instrumentation in Anatomy.
6. Imaging Sciences and Radiographic Anatomy (It will include advanced studies in all aspects of microscopy. The other part may be controversial but we can employ the services of Radiographers Registration Board)
7. Human mechanics and Sports sciences
8. Anatomical prosection and Plastination.
9. Continuing Education for Anatomy
10. The course content of these areas are being expanded and if the house gives a nod to it, a committee could be set up to verify and ascertain possibility and functionality of the proposal. We suggest a 6 months period of certification where in the second semester of 300 level (including their holidays), our students go for the certification course or a six months training after graduation before youth service. It is the option of the house to decide.

It is becoming very obvious that the near future may not be funny for our teaming soldiers of graduates and if their future is not thought of and discussed by all of us who feel we are established in the discipline of Anatomy, a day shall come when Anatomical terrorism will dominate our professional horizon. This is a clarion call for us all to move, uphold and to stabilize the beauty of our profession.

PRAYER

1. That all of us, irrespective of our clinical and non-clinical backgrounds, should rise-up to the challenge of this exigency of a thinned curriculum for BSc Anatomy and create a platform for these graduates within our Gross Anatomy Laboratories where they can be spurred to chart a path in modern prosection.
2. That we look at the suggested grade levels and make recommendations to the appropriate quarters with a background that it will: i) revitalize the art of prosection in Anatomy. Ii) Rejuvenate the spirit of research in our gross Anatomy laboratories. Iii) Create another brand of career opportunities for the numerous graduates of Anatomy. Iv) Incorporate plastination into our learning curricula.
3. That we initiate lobbying of the National assembly to pass a bill on making the teaming graduates of BSc Anatomy relevant in the Biomedical Sciences by establishing an Institute of Sciences that will be controlled by a council of Anatomists headed by a Chair.
4. That we also write the NUC to consider this proposal in view of the campaign for self-sustainability of our graduate trainees as stated in the National policy on education.
5. That all Provosts of Colleges of Medicine be written to update them on the exigencies of the establishment of BSc programs in Anatomy and the need to allow/encourage the repositioning of the programs to be of better service in both the Medical and Basic Science Faculties through our resolutions that will arise from presentations and positions in this AGM.

We will conclude again with part of the words of preface to the 37th Edition of Gray's Anatomy which reads 'Anatomy is a part not merely of Medical Science, but also beyond that, a biological knowledge, and beyond that also a part of the totality of mankind's understanding of his universe' As a result, we shall not be intimidated by the exigencies of yesteryears occasioned by thinned curriculum on which our current BSc programs were established. Rather, let us rise to the occasion and create paths of career prosperity; eliminate career confusion precipitated by false claims of cerebral inferiority and galvanize for upward mobility for our own and our kind.