



### THE PIONEER FEMALE DENTIST

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Although the profession of dentistry in Nigeria has been dominated by male members who constitute the majority of practitioners<sup>(1)</sup>, a number of female dentists have played dominant roles in advancing the course of dentistry in the country. Such dentists have never been adequately recognized, and hardly are their contributions put in historical perspective. It is necessary to document for posterity the selfless, altruistic and professional devotion of our female pioneer dentists. Such will provide gender balance and offer better insight into the diverse career paths that women leaders in dentistry have taken, including the various leadership styles they exhibited. This will also correct the erroneous notion that leadership in Nigerian dentistry had only been exclusive to men. Therefore, the purpose of this report is to document the contributions of Dr. Grace Adaria Guobadia, a pioneer Nigerian female dentist.

Dr. Grace Adaria Guobadia, from the royal house of Pepple in the Bonny Kingdom (**Figure 1**), and Dr. Simisola Onibuwe Johnson (the grand-daughter of the foremost Nationalist Herbert Macaulay) were the first female Nigerians to qualify as dentists. The duo qualified in 1957 from the same institution, the University of Durham, UK. Dr. Guobadia obtained the Licentiate in Dental Surgery (LDS) and was appointed as Government Dental Surgeon in Lagos on 27-10-1957. She was officially registered with the Nigerian Medical Council on 19-11-1957. Although both qualified the same year, Dr. Simi Johnson obtained the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) degree and was appointed into the Nigerian Government service a little bit later, specifically on 14-7-1958 and registered with the Nigerian Medical Council on 30/7/1958. Dr. Guobadia can therefore be said to be the first female Nigerian Dentist to practice in the country. Dr. Guobadia was promoted Senior Dental Surgeon on 1-3-1961 and was awarded the Foundational Fellowship of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (FMCGDS) in 1971<sup>(2-4)</sup>.

She was married to Chief Abel Salawu Guobadia a great industrialist who established the first wholly indigenous electronics assembly plant in Nigeria, Maiden Electronic Works Limited.

#### **Some important contributions within and outside dentistry**

Contributions to the resuscitation and growth of the Faculty of General Dental Practice of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria.

The Faculty of General Dental Practice of the National

Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria was constituted in 1979 but was subsequently declared moribund in 1988 and finally suspended in 1989 for non-performance. Professor O. K. Alausa then Registrar of NPMCN initiated the move for resuscitation and Dr. M. O. Taiwo (who later became the President of the College, January 2008 to December 2009) contacted Dr. Guobadia and Major General (Dr.) K. Sho-Silva who then jointly signed the first letter to the Senate of the NPMCN for the resuscitation of the Faculty. A list of 14 provisional board members was subsequently drawn and presented to the Senate of the NPMCN. The request for resuscitation was granted at the 43rd Senate meeting of NPMCN held on December 8, 1994. Dr. Guobadia then acted as Faculty Secretary until the first full Faculty Board meeting when she was elected 3rd Senate member. Her intervention, no doubt, helped in resuscitating and sustaining the Faculty. Others who played prominent roles include Late Major General (Dr.) K. Sho-Silva, Dr. Simi Johnson, Dr. K. Subair, Dr. S. O. Ebigwe, Dr. M.O. Osisanya, Dr. J.O. Oyelakin and Dr. Adeolu Okeowo<sup>(4)</sup>.

#### **Contributions to education and training**

Dr. Guobadia was a Member of the Governing Council, University of Ilorin from 1978 to 1982. She also at different times served as Member of Dental Advisory Council on Education, Rivers State; Member of the Nigeria Medical Council; Member of Advisory Council, Kings College, Lagos; Member of the National Advisory Committee for Social Development and Member of Court of Governors, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan.

#### **Formation of the Nigerian Dental Association**

Dr. Guobadia joined other dentists who practiced in Lagos to form the Nigerian Dental Association in 1962. These include Dr. Obasi, Dr. Otun, Dr. Ogunbodede, Dr. Inyang, Dr. Subair, Prof. JR Ana, Prof. NE Henshaw, Prof. JO Akinosi, Prof. FE Okoisor, Prof. JO Adenubi and Dr. Simi Johnson<sup>(5)</sup>. The Nigerian Dental Association is still today the umbrella body of all practising dentists in the country.

#### **Social and philanthropic contributions**

Dr. Guobadia was President of the Association of University Women, Lagos Branch; Chairman of International Relations Committee of Nigerian Committee Member of the Nigeria National Association of University Women; President, International Women Society; and Member of the

Executive Council of Nigerian Red Cross Society, Lagos. She was President, Soroptimist International National Council of Nigeria from 1987 to 1988 and she admirably combined Soroptimism with her private dental practice. She was proprietor of GPG Dental Clinic located in Ikoyi, Lagos. In recognition of her numerous contributions to the Nigerian Womenfolk, the Soroptimist International of Lagos conferred on her a Honorary Life Membership.

She was Chairman of the Nigerian Society for the Blind from 1977 to 1987 and her tenure resulted in the improvement of the Blind Centre and INLAKS Library, which has a Braille printing machine and books.

Dr. Guobadia was a devoted Christian who made substantial contributions to the furtherance of her religion as a means making the world a better place to live. She was awarded the CPA (Cathedral Parish Award) in 2004 by the Cathedral Church of Christ, Marina, Lagos, in recognition of her dedication and contributions.

#### **Other contributions**

Dr. Guobadia was a very active Member of the Lagos Horticultural Society and a one time President of the Society. She was also a member of the Royal Horticultural Society of England. She represented the Federal Republic of Nigeria in March 1990 at the International Expo of Flowers & Greenery in Osaka, Japan.



Dr. Grace Adaria Guobadia at the International Expo of Flowers and Greenery held at Osaka, Japan in 1990.

Dr. Guobadia died on Friday July 1, 2005 at the age of 81 years. The Anofi & Grace Guobadia Foundation (AGGF) (<http://www.aggfoundation.org/>) was founded on July 25, 2006 by the family in her honour. AGGF is a Non-Governmental Organization which awards scholarships to indigent but brilliant female students in both Secondary and Tertiary Institutions, and provides water in form of boreholes to all areas in Nigeria. Her name has also, deservedly, been emblazoned in the Hall of Fame, Abuja for her services to her fatherland, Nigeria. Her contributions remain indelible in the annals of Nigerian dentistry, and in the lives of various individuals, societies and organizations, locally and internationally, that she positively influenced as a dentist, administrator, proprietor, philanthropist, and god-fearing professional.



**Late Dr. Grace Adaria Guobadia**



**Table 1. List of Dental cadre staff who worked with Dr. Guobadia in Western Nigeria (Adapted from Staff List Western Nigeria 1965)**

<b>Appointment and Name</b>	<b>Date of Birth</b>	<b>Date of First Appointment</b>	<b>Date of Present Appointment</b>	<b>Salary Scale and Remarks</b>
<b>DENTAL CADRE</b>				
<b>Chief Dental Officer</b>				
N. E. D. Obasi (m)	22-12-22	1-10-52	1-10-60	Group 6
<b>Senior Dental Surgeons and Dental Surgeons (8 posts)</b>				
<b>Senior Dental Surgeons</b>				
G. A. Guobadia	-	22-10-57	1-3-61	Scale X and Scale A
A. M. O. Olaniyan (m)	30-7-29	3-11-59	1-1-62	Scale X
<b>Transferred from Federal Public Service with effect from 1st of May, 1961</b>				
D. Ogunbiyi (m)	6-12-23	24-11-61	1-1-64	Scale A
<b>Dental Surgeons</b>				
T. O. Smith (m)	13-8-26	26-1-59	26-1-59	
S. A. J. Ibikunle (m)	24-5-35	6-2-53	2-3-63	
S. O. Ajayi-Obe (m)	16-2-34	30-4-63	30-4-63	On probation
M. A. Sadare	20-9-34	28-5-63	28-5-63	On probation
E. O. Solarin	27-12-36	26-3-65	26-3-65	On probation
<b>Dental Technologists and Dental Technicians (8 posts)</b>				
<b>Dental technologists</b>				
J. S. Akadri (m)	2-11-32	29-8-60	29-8-60	Scale C(T) 2, 3, 4 and Scale E 3
W. H. A. Lewis (m)	6-2-30	13-9-60	13-9-60	
K. M. Akinla (m)	8-7-31	21-9-60	21-9-60	
J. O. Campbell	12-6-30	8-3-61	8-3-61	
R. Fesobi	17-6-38	8-4-58	1-3-64	
O. Thomas	7-11-29	1-11-50	1-12-64	
O. O. Olaleye	4-8-36	23-5-60	1-12-64	
1 Vacancy				

#### **Acknowledgement**

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## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD TO PROF. E. O. ADEKEYE

At the Biennial World Cleft Lip & Palate Congress that took place in Seychelles 7 - 11 May 2012, Prof E. O. Adekeye was given a LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD for his academic contributions, invaluable services to African patients with maxillofacial deformities and FOUR DECADES of mentorship.



Photograph of Lifetime Achievement Award Recipients



Prof Adekeye receiving award from Minister of Health, Mahe Republic of Seychelles