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SPECIAL RELEASE

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OBITUARY

PROFESSOR ENITAN ABISOGUN BABABUNMI

(1940 – 2017)

The Vice-Chancellor A. I. Olayinka, FAS, announces with deep regret, the transition of Professor Enitan Abisogun Bababunmi, a retired staff of the Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, College of Medicine. The sad event occurred on Monday 29 May, 2017.

Professor Bababunmi was born at Cape Coast, Ghana on 8 September, 1940 to the Bababunmi Family of Olowogbowo, Lagos. He attended Breadfruit Anglican Primary School, Olowogbowo, Lagos (1946 – 1951) and had his secondary education at Igbobi College, Lagos where he had double promotion and finished in Division 1 in 1955. For his Higher School Certificate, he attended Ibadan Grammar School, Molete, Ibadan before proceeding on Federal Government of Nigeria's Scholarship to the University College, London (UCL) where he obtained the Bachelor's Degree in Biochemistry in 1965. He later obtained MSc and PhD degrees in Biochemistry from this University in 1967 and 1970 respectively under the tutelage of his benefactor, mentor and sage, Late Professor Olumbe Bassir, the First Head of Biochemistry Department, University of Ibadan.

Professor Bababunmi had his pre-doctoral training at the National Cancer Institute, Bethesda, USA as a Rockefeller Foundation Fellow in 1969 and post-doctoral training in a number of laboratories abroad, with Professor Richard T. Williams (FRS) of the St Mary's Hospital Medical School (now Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, London UK) in the summers of 1969–1972 and later at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, United State of America in the Laboratory of the legendary Professor Albert Lehninger between 1975 – 1976. He was Research Professor at University of Liverpool, School of Tropical Medicine, United Kingdom;

Eleanor Roosevelt – American Cancer Society International Fellow between 1989 – 1990; Fellow, International Union against Cancer, Geneva, Switzerland from 1999 until his demise; Honorary Professor, Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health, De Montfort University, Leicester, Scraftoft Campus, United Kingdom between 1997 – 2000; Honorary Fellow, Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Pennsylvania, USA from 2000 and elected Fellow of Royal Society of Medicine, London, UK, between 2000 until his demise. He served as a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) Expert Committee on Food Safety; member, WHO and FAO Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives and member, International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS).

He was guest speaker on scores of occasions in major Pharmaceutical Companies, Cancer Institute and Academic Centres in North America (United State and Canada), Australia, Japan, Indian, Africa (East, West and Southern) and Europe (United Kingdom and Continental). By a recent count, he had presented a minimum of 100 papers between 1969–2003 at International meetings which covered Biochemistry, Biotechnology, Nutrition, Toxicology, Cancer Studies, Pharmacology and Therapeutics.

In recognition of his unique contributions to the field of Toxicology, he was decorated with the degree of Doctor of science (DSc) by the University of London (1987) and later became a Fellow, Royal College of Pathology (FRC Path.), United Kingdom in 1990.

Professor Bababunmi started his career in this University as Lecturer II in the Department of Biochemistry in 1967. He rose through the ranks and was promoted Reader in 1975 and Professor in 1978.

Late Professor Bababunmi was appointed Head, Department of Biochemistry, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan (1979–1984). As a visionary leader and team player, he created active research sections/areas of specialisation in the Department when he became Head in 1978 with Drs G.O. Emerole, A.O. Uwaifo, M.A. Fafunso and his good self as foundation Director (1979–1984). He was also Director, Postgraduate Institute for Medical Research and Training (PIMRAT), College of Medicine, University of Ibadan (1991–1993). He became the Vice-Chancellor, Lagos State University, Nigeria from 1993 to 1996 and was the Research Director and Chief Executive Officer of ENHICA International Research Network, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) he founded in 2000 with a focus on Biomedical research worldwide. He was also Co-Principal Investigator, Proteomics and Cancer Therapeutics, DHNU-UK Medical Research

Council in Laboratories Cambridge, UK and Research Director and Chairman Glopatech (UK) Ltd, London. He retired voluntarily from the University after a highly successful and meritorious service in 1999.

Professor Bababunmi's area of research was Membrane Biochemistry and Toxicology. His publications on toxicity of aflatoxins with Professor O. Bassir, Professor G. O. Emerole and Professor A. O. Uwaifo contributed immensely to global knowledge on the hepatocarcinogenicity of the aflatoxins. His research work on the regulation of calcium release from mitochondria by the oxidation – reduction states of pyridine nucleotides with Professor Albert Lehninger formed the basis for the implication of calcium in mitochondrial – mediated apoptosis via opening of the Mitochondrial Membrane Permeability Transition (MMPT) Pore. Furthermore, he started research on plasma membrane calcium ATPase and later in 1981 he organized a UNESCO/WHO/ICRO International Training course on Basic Concepts and Techniques in Research on Biological Membrane during which the likes of Professor Ernesto Carafoli, Sydney Fleicher, Angello Azzi and other eminent membrane biochemists were resource persons. He was a highly distinguished Biochemistry and Biotechnology Teacher, who, even after retirement, scientifically researched into human degenerative disease in order to discover cost-effective and novel anti-viral and anti-cancer drug candidates. He had supervised several PhD students in the special area of membrane biochemistry including Professors O. Obidoa, O. O. Olorunsogo, J. O. Olowookere, C. O. Bewaji, G. A. Adenuga, and Dr. O. M. Bolaji.

Late Professor Bababunmi published over hundred papers in major scientific journals and two books. He also had two United States patents issued in 2002 and 2005 on formulation and methods for treating skeletal muscle degeneration caused by malnutrition and disease.

He is survived by his lovely wife, Mrs. Josephine Abokuma Bababunmi (nee Blankson), children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters and several mentees.

He will be greatly missed by his family, colleagues, friends, Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences, College of Medicine and the entire University community.

May the good Lord grant his family the fortitude to bear the great and irreparable loss.

The funeral arrangements will be announced by the family.

May his gentle soul rest in peace.

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