

## BOOK APPRAISAL: HISTORY OF DENTISTRY IN NIGERIA

O.S. Michael

Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

*Correspondence:***Dr. O.S. Michael**

Dept. of Pharmacology and Therapeutics,

University of Ibadan, Nigeria

Email: micobaroo@yahoo.com

**SUMMARY**

The book appraised in this edition of *Chronicles of Medical History, History of Dentistry in Nigeria*, is a product of many years of painstaking research. The Author, Professor Eyitope Ogunbodede, has put together an excellent book that is a great work of art. Dentistry is one of the first specialties in medicine with a very long history; evidence of periodontal disease has been traced back to at least 100,000 years in human remains. However, the book by Professor Ogunbodede is the first comprehensive record of the History of dentistry in Nigeria. It is a must-read for every medical professional practicing in Nigeria and a worthy addition to every library.

**Dentistry in Healthcare**

From modest foundations, the specialty of dentistry has grown to become one of the most relevant service providers of healthcare in the community. A large proportion of every community seeks after dentists. The importance of proper care of the teeth cannot be over-emphasized. The mouth is the portal for water and food, the custodian of speech, and an organ of social expression. Unlike many sub-specialties of medicine, oral health is a concern of every individual in the population. However, the history of dentistry has been largely ignored by historians, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

Dentistry is defined as the evaluation, diagnosis, prevention and/or treatment (non-surgical, surgical or related procedures) of diseases, disorders and/or conditions of the oral cavity, maxillofacial area and/or the adjacent and associated structures and their impact on the human body; provided by a dentist, within the scope of his/her education, training and experience, in accordance with the ethics of the profession and applicable law (As adopted by the 1997 American Dental Association House of Delegates)<sup>1</sup>. Over the years, dentistry has grown into many sub-specialties approved by the Council on Dental Education and Licensure of the American Dental Association. These include Dental Public Health, Endodontics, Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology, Oral and Maxillofacial Radiology, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics, Pediatric Dentistry, Periodontics, and Prosthodontics.

**Ancient History of Dentistry**

Dentistry and Dental Surgery are practically synonymous. The trail of evolution of Dentistry from scratch in the antiquity to one of the most developed

disciplines of modern medical sciences over the centuries is exciting, interesting and thoughtful<sup>2</sup>. Formal qualifications and professional status were achieved only in the past century or so by dentists, yet the history of dentistry is virtually as long as that of medicine. Evidence of periodontal disease has been traced back to at least 100,000 years in human remains<sup>3</sup>.

Dentistry is one of the earliest branches of Medicine in the history of medical care. The earliest known reference to a person identified as a dental practitioner was Hesy-Ra, an Egyptian Scribe who lived around 2600 BC. The Eber's papyrus refers to diseases of the teeth and various toothache remedies. Between 500 – 300 BC, Hippocrates and Aristotle wrote about dentistry including the eruption pattern of teeth. These and other landmarks in the history of dentistry are available online in a well-written time-chart of the Complete Dental Guide<sup>4</sup>.

**History of Dentistry in Nigeria**

Nigeria has a robust and well-structured dental service structure. However, a comprehensive review of the history of dentistry in Nigeria was only recently put together in the book by Prof. Eyitope O. Ogunbodede. The book, an excellent work of art, was published in 2015. It covers in great details the early years of traditional dental practice to modern dentistry in Nigeria.

The beginning of modern dentistry in Nigeria was traced to Dr. Ewart Gladstone Maclean who established his Practice in Lagos in 1903. Dr. MacLean joined the Baptist mission and worked at Saki, Ogbomoso, and Iwo. The details of his practice are described in the book. Other Christian missionaries



Professor Eyitope Ogunbodede

followed, with the Baptists playing a very prominent role in the early years of dentistry in Nigeria. The Baptists established churches, schools, and hospitals. In these hospitals, dental services were provided. Professor Ogunbodede dedicated a whole chapter (chapter 5) in the book to Dr. Sydney Obafemi Philips, whom he referred to as the first Nigeria dentist.

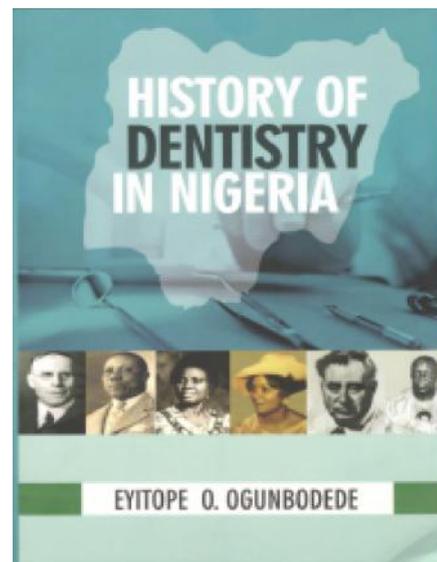


Dr. Sydney Obafemi Philips

Dr. Sydney Obafemi Philips was born into a well-known Lagos family of the Philips on 29th November, 1894. He had his early education at CMS Grammar School and King's College, Lagos. He studied dentistry at the United Kingdom, Glasgow, graduating in 1926. He returned to Nigeria and set up a dental practice in Lagos that thrived very well. Professor Ogunbodede also documented that other early dentists who spearheaded the development of private dental practice in Nigeria include Dr. Demetius Voudzourakis, Dr. E.O. Otun, and Dr. Iyeowuna Dublin Green.

### **The Book: History of Dentistry in Nigeria**

This book will enrich every medical practitioner in Nigeria and those with a love for history. Details of dental schools, from early days to the present, are described in great details. The early years of Postgraduate Medical training in Nigeria and names of early fellows are well covered. The book radiates the passion of the author in a way that only few works of art have done. The effort he put in in the writing of this book is great and very tangible as one reads the pages of the book. By every measure, it is a major work of art and a noteworthy contribution to the literature of medicine in Nigeria.



The book was published in 2015 by the Foundation for Dental Education Museums and Archives, Ilesa Road, Ife Bus stop, PMB 011, OAU Post-office, Ife.

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### **Disclosure**

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### ***ERRATUM***

*The December 2015 edition of Chronicles of Medical History was on the Nobel Prize for Physiology of Medicine awarded in 2015 and not in 2014 as mistakenly written in the first paragraph. This error is highly regretted*