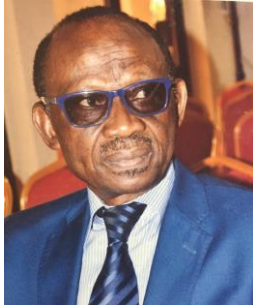




When the Prof ... Professor Joseph Mbede Came Marching In! He Was Unique, Pr Joseph Mbede, (and his Twin was Pr Hughes Nyame)

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I was only a third year medical student at the celebrated CUSS in Njong Melen, Yaoundé then. But Pr Joseph Mbede's fame was already told and well applauded. Seniors and freshmen alike all "feared" his total dedication to excellence in knowledge of, clinical practice and quality research in child health and childcare. As far as I can remember, Pr Joseph Mbede, though he already was an associate professor of pediatrics, would never take his night or week end call duties elsewhere that in the hospital! What a dream mentoring we had from him then!

He will review all cases with us, be it on late Saturday afternoon or in the middle of Sunday night. Both physiology and clinical knowledge will be reminded in no time before he starts teaching us, and showing us by example how to manage a said patient. He was so "good at finding veins" that he would not wait for his competent nurses to start any drip for him. Blood counts and CSF exams, he would carry them, with an exceptional mastery of laboratory technology that is widely lost today. Quite aware that most of his students would serve in remote areas of Cameroon, he empowered us with grassroots affordable, but science accurate technologies both in diagnosis and treatment of childhood diseases. Malaria and infectious diseases diagnoses came easier from his mentoring, oral rehydration and best practices in child nutrition were his favourites!

Pr Joseph Mbede saw us grow, from fragile barely 19-year-old students to pre-adults ready to be sent all over Cameroon disseminating excellent and affordable child care. Together with his "twin" and close friend Pr Hughes Nyame of revered memory, they built the pediatric department of the CUSS under Pr Hubert Nkoulou's authority, making it the first perfectly organized department of the medical school and the first to showcase clinical protocols that students took home with pride and gratitude. The first ever manual of pediatrics in Cameroon Late Pr Hughes Nyame authored paid a resounding homage paid to his complicity and friendship with Pr Joseph Mbede. Morning clinical meetings that have become our medical school trademark ("soviets"), are their creation, sealed by their first ever assistant lecturer, late Dr Robert Befidi Mengue.

Research in Child health and child care in Cameroon owes its birth and major progress to the Master, Pr Joseph Mbede. His partnership with Harvard School of Medicine at CUSS creation, paved the way to a better understanding and treatment of most of children endemic diseases in our country. Measles, poliomyelitis, affordable nutrition and fight against diarrheal diseases in children came high in his first research agenda with very concrete results. Not only he taught us how to manage clinical cases, but he also deeply impacted government policies and influenced successes at grassroots level. The Cameroon Pediatric Association (SOCAPED) is his creation, which has succeeded in disseminating the best practices in child health all over the Central African Region. Pr Mbede Joseph's long serving as government minister has in no way decreased his high involvement in pediatric research and academia. We the pediatricians in Cameroon are immensely grateful to his mentorship.

Pr Wali TF Muna who just passed to God's glory was one of his closest friend. Together they created the National Medical Conference, an annual event that guaranteed a high level continuous medical education to all physicians in the country for a decade. Together, they made Yaoundé General Hospital the first renowned pole of excellence in health care here in our fatherland.

A man of strong conviction, but also a leader who knew a lot about weaknesses and challenges facing his trainees and colleagues, Pr Joseph Mbede was a forgiving master to all of us. He was at the "avant garde" of the best living together, making it a personal philosophy to accommodate and encourage around him, colleagues from all regions and religions in Cameroon.

But first and foremost, our master Pr Joseph Mbede will be remembered as a humble, gentle and wonderful pediatrician. Mothers and children will never forget his endless kindness to the sick child and its anxious parents. Most of us will always dream and pray to inherit his soft and kind touch that seems so hard to emulate! Our master Pr Joseph Mbede believed in and lived in the hospital where he gave his best time and best ability to the little ones. His extreme and up-to-date competence, his honesty and simplicity are a living testimony that physicians need no compromise with corruption and money mongering in order to live a blessed, recognized and fulfilled existence.

Good Lord! I am so grateful to be among the numbers, scores he trained! To pass my Master's relay baton to the next generation hopefully with the same science, commitment and honesty!

When Prof Joseph Mbede goes marching in ... to The Lord's glory.

I praise Almighty God who blessed him with this wonderful life he lived here!