

"Why I won't Practice Clinical Medicine despite Studying Medicine for 10 Years"

"Esophagogastroduodenoscopy"

The first time I heard the word was in my third year of University. I cannot remember specifically the class nor the topic. However I cannot forget in a hurry the issues that arose in that class nor the feelings of that experience.

"Esophagogastroduodenoscopy"

I tried pronouncing the words again, slowly and carefully this time ensuring that all the words were correctly called and I that didn't lose some of my teeth in the process.

"Eso....gastro...." I tried again and again to get the word correctly into my skull and to memorize it. I knew fully well it was going to be asked and demanded for in the exams. By the time I had managed to learn the word by heart and to pronounce it correctly, the teacher was already moving out of class. Class was over and I had learnt nothing. Oh, I had learnt esophagogastroduodenoscopy.

You see, you cannot exactly blame me for trying so hard but learning nothing. How do you expect my small brain just 6 inches long, weighing intangibly 1 kilogram to get in so fast words like esophagogastroduodenoscopy and Pseudopseudoparathyroidism. In a particular class on

occupational disease, we were asked to learn the word PNEUMONOUltrAMICROSCOPICSilICOVOLCANOCONIOSIS or to understand the function of a protein called METHIONYLTHREONYLTHREONYGLUTAMINYLARGINYL...ISOLEUCINE. Are those even words or full sentences?

The long words are not the most annoying part, when you discover how incredibly simple their meaning is, you will begin to wonder how wicked human beings can be. So you mean a word as long as Esophagogastroduodenoscopy, which almost got me some teeth removed in trying to pronounce, simply is a medical procedure to investigate the digestive tract. Olohun gbami, indeed it's a wicked world.

With daily doses of long latin and greek words, it's no surprise while every medical class soon became a night mare for many of us.

Well dear friend, let me give you a little piece of free unsolicited advice here. Except you have a deep passion for Medicine, do not make an attempt at Medical school. Trust me, doing that will be the easiest road to frustration. When this form of frustration became a daily experience, my internal alarm went out loud. I began to miss something, something very deep. Perhaps a brief visit to my childhood and my childhood activities will help you understand why this was happening to me...

You see as a child, I loved animal hunting especially birds. Of course, in Africa we kill birds. With my catapult and my little

fingers pulling on the stones, I was a rare danger to perching birds of any size. Few things as a child gave me more joy than knowing I had successfully ended a bird's life. I was a Lilliputian, short-statured and rare, but I posed a tall and mighty danger to birds. While I love to make more boasts about the many atrocities I committed against the animal kingdom, I won't for the sake of "animal right activists" who might just be reading this. I wouldn't love to be sued.

The fact that I was so good with my hands with many dead birds on my record made me think becoming a surgeon was the natural path for me. So I wrote on all my textbooks as a child how I was going to be a surgeon, a neurosurgeon. At least, so I thought until we began experimenting with human corpses commonly called cadavers.

As medical students, we were expected to have practical anatomy sessions at least twice a week working on the cadavers. Those moments were usually the most sickening moments of my week. I hated everything about dissection; the scalpel, the forceps and especially the strong smell of formaldehyde (formalin); a special preservative for keeping the bodies. In fact I hated everything and everyone including our prosector (teacher) and I was sure she hated me too.

A particular experience I'm not likely to forget till I depart this world happened in that class on a Friday afternoon. I had done everything possible to escape being called to the bodies for cutting and demonstration. However, that did not stop my

wittiness and bringing some vibe and energy to the classroom. The prosector warned me a couple of times to be quiet, but I was too excited to keep mum. After all, it was Friday, the day of freedom all over the world.

After a few warnings which I refused to heed, the prosector screamed at me,

“Success, get right now to the side of this body and show me the Ulnar nerve”.

I lingered, then dragged myself to the side of the table, murmuring under my breath. Not only did I not have any gloves on, I had no clue what an Ulnar nerve looked like. I however stood by the side of the table looking like a repentant thief caught in the act.

“Success, show me....” The teacher screamed at me again. I opened my mouth to explain to her why I don’t think the dead body still had an ulnar nerve.

What followed was the unexpected and totally disgusting.

Out of rage, the teacher banged her hand heavily on the cadaver which was lying on the table.

“Splaaaaassssssshhhhhh.....” I watched in horror as formalin, the chemical preservative for keeping the bodies splashed everywhere across the room. Landing all over my coat and into my open mouth were several drops of the chemical. For a moment I felt like I was dead. If I was not, momentarily I wished I was. I was appalled, instantly felt sick, horrified and shocked.

Disgust is an understatement of what I sensed. I felt nauseated and offended. I tried to induce myself to vomit without success. I spat so much till my salivary glands protested. In between, I was screaming and shouting. My class mates however laughed their heads off including the teacher. On my way home, I bought a new toothbrush and washed my teeth till I bled through my gums.

I swore from that day never to have anything to do with corpses. That was going to be the last straw that broke the Carmel's back. In fact, I was not going to move close to any sick person. I hated the sight of blood oozing out of people on surgical tables. More irritating for me was the smell of hospital wards, drugs and sick people. But wait, wasn't I training to be a Medical practitioner? What is a medical practitioner without sick people, drugs or even corpses?

I thought if I became a medical practitioner and I a patient asked me," Doctor, I'm sick and I want to kill myself, what should I do?' My response would be 'Do you need a gun or a knife. You also have the option of jumping over the bridge or I could provide you a rope'. I knew I was too much a realist to be a patient's dream of a doctor.

All of these experiences drove me to seek out who I really was. If I wasn't feeling medicine, I was not ready to pretend like I felt it the rest of my life. So I knew I needed to define myself. In my journey of self-discovery, I came to understand that sitting in classes where Medicine was being discussed does not

necessarily make you a doctor. It may confer on you the title, you may get the knowledge to pass the boards and exams, but a full life is way more than that.

PART II

Let me explain it to you this way, if you choose to plant an apple seed with some maize seed and put them all in same environment, same soil, that same environment does not make the apple seed to become maize nor vice-versa. The environment does not convert the apple seed into a maize seed. The greatest challenge of the apple now, is to become itself, a full grown apple in the midst of the maize or in a maize environment. I hope you understand this?

The greatest task of the apple in that illustration is to become itself. Same way, the greatest task of every individual is to become, unveil and reveal yourself in spite of any environment. The environment does not make you, you have already become something before you made entrance into this world. Your greatest assignment now is to unveil, reveal, present and disclose that which you are or that which you have been coded for. You now have to process that something which you have been into someone that the entire world can see. It's a risk but the alternative is even unthinkable.

“Those who don't want to take risks in life end up being the losers.” — Dr Sunday Adelaja

You must understand that studying engineering does not make you or convert you into one. You either have the interest and passion for it or you do not. You may have the knowledge of engineering but you will lack the life. This is why we have so much mediocrity walking the surface of our planet earth today.

Many are just doing barely enough to pass, get a job and survive. I don't want to survive, I want to live and live to my utmost potential. Schools and Universities are the worst hit, where many students are clamoring to get out of school. Many can't simply wait for the day of graduation, not because they look forward to life after school but because school had been a terrible prison for them. School does not necessarily have to be hell if you enjoy what you are doing. As a University student, if you cannot begin to find answers to the problems of our world from school, you are studying the wrong course. Excellent students only go to school to find answers to their puzzle, not to acquire theories.

"You have to be burning with an idea, or a problem, or a wrong that you want to right. If you're not passionate enough from the start, you'll never stick it out." — Steve Jobs

This is the point I am making, you must seek out who you truly are. I'm not talking about what your course or profession made you or what your parents sent you to study. I'm talking about that which keeps you awake all night and burns in your soul endlessly. When you seek out who you are and choose to become that which you truly are, you will disappoint a lot of people, but you would have appointed yourself. Such a man cannot be employed because he has fully deployed himself. Such a man cannot be fired, he owns the place.

Therefore, your task in any environment is to seek and stay true to your true essence. Seek that which is within you and give the

world something to remember. My journey of ten years through medical school has made me see a lot. I have seen gifted politicians in anatomy classes, struggling and doing everything to barely make it by. I have seen beautiful models and graced musicians in surgical rounds living life like it's just another day. I have seen athletes, designers, writers, orators, singers in displaced places. Oh that we may have the urgency that life demands, refusing to let a single get stolen from our lives. Oh that we will refuse to be displaced.

“Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life. Don't be trapped by dogma - which is living with the results of other people's thinking. Don't let the noise of other's opinions drown out your own inner voice. And most important, have the courage to follow your heart and intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.” — Steve Jobs

So when I discovered my disinterest in medical practice, I began to seriously discover and develop myself in the things that I had passion for. I travelled endlessly and made numerous road trips. In Nigeria, I'd leave Osogbo, Osun State on Thursday, be in Lagos on Friday and by Saturday morning I was already in Uyo, Akwa Ibom state. Monday Morning, I was back to class for lectures. Such was my life. I succeeded in registering two businesses in school and published books. I joined organizations and led groups. I had an unending zeal for pioneering work of any sort. I discovered my passion for leadership and poured

myself into people. Such was an exciting life for me. Too exciting for any Pathology, Pharmacology or Pediatric class. I attended conferences and formed networks and friendships with people from all over the world. Luckily for me, the field of medicine is so wide that it can accommodate many interest areas. Treating few people a day made little sense to me when you can affect thousands of people at a single time.

I figured out that over the last ten years, I have read well over 1000 books, books that dealt with any area of my interest. I loved books so much I would buy books with my last penny, but I wouldn't spare a dime for medical resources unless it was absolutely necessary. I once bought a book with my transport fare and trekked more than five kilometers all the way home. I succeeded in buying my first Medical textbook with my own money in my 5th year. I bought it from a friend who otherwise would have given me free. So you know, the book was incredibly cheap.

The Adventist have a popular saying that goes thus 'Give me a child the first seven years of his life, and I will tell you what he can become'. I have my own version of the quote though, 'show me your library and what you spend your money on, and I will tell you what your life could be'.

"True leaders are born when you find something to die for" ...Myles Munroe

Here's the kicker and the point of this whole article; I choose not to practice clinical medicine because I am not a medical

doctor. I may be one by training, by Knowledge, skills and by title but I am not one by heart and passion. Sitting among prophets should not force you to start prophesying. Abi, na by force?

Here's the point for you too; seek to be you, the rest won't matter. Do not let the environment make you into a lie, do not let people's expectations make you into who you are not.

Finally, one of the words I began this article with was METHIONYLTHREONYLTHREONYLGLUTAMINYLGARGINYL...ISOLEUCINE. It's a protein in the human body called titin sequenced by different amino acids. Amino acids are the small blocks that come together to form a large substance called protein. So, a protein basically is an expression of the different amino acid components. When they are nucleotides and are three, they are called a codon, i.e codes for our DNA. Enough of medical terms.

You have a codon too. Seek to live out that which is your inner codon. Find your inner expression and bless the world with your existence. Be bold, find the courage, live and express your inner codon. Each day you have is a gift, choose to live each day deliberately, not to merely survive.

"The graveyard is the richest place on earth, because it is there that you will find all the hopes and dreams that were never fulfilled, the books that were never written, the songs that were never sung, the inventions that were never shared, the cures that were never discovered, all because someone was too afraid

to take that first step, keep with the problem, or determined to carry out their dream.”...Les Brown

Birds do not learn to fly, fishes do not learn to swim, why must humans be the only living specie that struggle and have panic attacks on Monday mornings?