



# MEDICAL ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIANS ACROSS GREAT BRITAIN

**President:** Dr Chris Agbo MBBS, MRCP, MSc, FWACP, FHEA, FAcadMed

**Secretary:** Dr Mike Nosa Ehima MBBS, MSc, MRCGP

**Registered Address**

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Kemp House  
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**19<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2023**

Welcome to this edition of the MANSAG Newsletter.

About 10 years ago, I was completing one of those forms where you are asked if you want to be on the organ donor register. As I had always done with these forms, I left the box unchecked. My wife asked why I did not want to be on the register. I thought hard about her question, and I said, "I don't know". Maybe I was a bit unsure, perhaps even a bit scared, of returning incomplete to Mother Earth when I die. What if the Resurrection or Reincarnation were to happen, might being incomplete hamper my chances? Naturally such reflections led to questions I had never contemplated. My wife wanted to know - did I want to be buried or cremated (and would I want some of my ashes to be kept here in England and the rest to be sent back home to Nigeria?). "Hold on", I said to her. "How would someone whose body has been cremated to ashes resurrect?" If I chose to be buried, how would my parents and siblings feel when they see my body and learn that the surgical wound in my tummy is where my organs have been harvested from. I didn't think that my family was ready to have this kind of conversation (organ harvesting/donation) with me back then. By this point in the conversation with my wife, even I had had enough of the morbid subject. My Naija instinct was to circle my hand over my head, click my fingers above my head and say, "God forbid" or "I reject it". But we were talking about death. I knew (as I do now) that it would come. After much reflection, I ticked the organ donor box giving consent for my organs to be harvested upon my death so another person on the waiting list for organ transplantation might have a second chance at life. I was agnostic and totally unsure about Resurrection or Reincarnation, and if they were real, I had convinced myself that God would give me a pass mark for my sacrificial donations and helping another person. And if I was wrong about God then I was a dead man! Literally.

During our conversation, I found out that: there were disproportionately more Afro-Caribbean patients on organ transplant waiting list; there were disproportionately fewer organ donors from the

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Afro-Caribbean community; the risk of transplant failure is less if one receives an organ from someone of the same ethnic background; approximately 80% of transplants in people from ethnic minority backgrounds are from white donors. I thought these statistics were stark. Speaking about death or organ donation is almost a taboo in our community.

Many of you might have encountered the same or similar dilemma to the one I described in the conversation with my wife. You might have or know of other reasons for not wanting to be on the organ donor register. Regardless of your personal reasons, I think it would be correct to say there are cultural barriers against organ donation to be overcome. Culture is not immutable. The cultures and the civilisations that not only survive but that thrive are those that are adaptable. Health conditions like hypertension and diabetes mellitus that lead to organ failure necessitating organ transplant are rife in the Afro-Caribbean community. Speaking at a personal level, the greatest learning point of the covid-19 pandemic is the realisation that I am as vulnerable as any of the patients with the most serious illnesses that I treat. I am not invincible (if you have waited for that phone call to hear whether your results confirm you have a life-changing diagnosis, you will understand this statement). One can be well one day and facing a serious life-changing diagnosis the following day. This is something that our guest writer for this edition of the MANSAG Newsletter knows all too well.

Let's be clear, organ transplants save lives! And what better way to make this point than the testimony of someone who spent 8 years waiting for kidney transplant. I met Mrs. Asumu at MANSAG Annual Conference which held in Manchester in 2019. Her story made me cry. Hers is a story of human pain and suffering, endurance, and hope. She has worked assiduously to improve the statistics I described earlier so that you or I have a far better experience were we to ever require life-saving organ transplant. She is a gift to our community, and I have the pleasure of introducing her as the guest writer for this edition of the MANSAG Newsletter. She summarises the nature and extent of the problem I have been describing in our community, the Organ Donation Law (also known as Max & Keira's Law or the Opt-Out-Law) and what changes to the law mean not only for us who live in the U.K. but also for Nigerians at home seeking transplant treatment in the U.K. No doubt we would all be familiar with the case of Senator Ike Ekweremadu

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which is presently going on in U.K. courts. It is in our interest to read and understand the new law. She ends with a reflection on challenges/barrier to organ donation in our community and how to address these. I'm sure you'll all join me in thanking Mrs. Asumu for her tireless work in supporting our community.

And now to other matters and developments.

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## CONFERENCES:

MANSAG usually has two national conferences every year - the Annual Scientific & Educational Symposium/Charity Ball which usually holds in May or June, and the Annual Conference with Annual General Meeting which holds in October.

MANSAG has been very busy in the last quarter of 2022. It held its national annual conference in Daventry in October 2022. This was the second face-to-face meeting since the pandemic officially ended (the first face-to-face meeting held in June 2022 in Cambridge), and it was appropriately titled **Rebuilding the bridges post-pandemic**. There was a lively panel discussion on the first night around how the various professional Nigerian associations in the UK can collaborate and work together for the benefit of all Nigerian healthcare workers in the UK. The panelists included the presidents of UniBen Medical Alumni Association UNN Medical Alumni Association, Ibadan Medical Specialists Group (IMSG), Nigerian GPs UK (NGPUK), UniZik Medical Alumni Association and the African Caribbean Dental Association. There was also a presentation by Prof. Bola Owolabi, the Director of Health Inequalities at NHS England and NHSI) about tackling health inequalities.

On the second day of the conference, there was a wide-ranging presentation on issues such as GMC Fitness to Practice - Lesson learnt delivered by Prof. Ngozi Edi-Osaghie; Supporting the

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International Medical Graduate: BMA-MANSAG collaboration, which was delivered by Prof Philip Banfield, the Chair of the BMA; Role of Diaspora Associations in Healthcare Delivery in Nigeria presented by Dr Oyebanji Filani, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services in Ekiti State. Prof. Mala Rao, the Medical Adviser to NHS England's workforce Race Equality Strategy gave an important lecture on how induction programmes for IMGs should be structured and delivered. Prof. Ashaolu shared his experience of practising in the UK and in Nigeria. He works with Cedacrest Hospital in Abuja/Lagos.

## COLLABORATIONS:

In pursuit of its goal of collaborating with other professional Nigerian groups, MANSAG lent its support to the end-of-year Christmas Party organised by NDUK (Nigerian Doctors in the UK) which held in London. Food was sumptuous and there was a lot of networking.

MANSAG continues to work behind the scenes to bring together all the various professional Nigerian groups to serve the interests of every Nigerian healthcare professional be they doctors, nurses, radiographers, physiotherapists, other allied healthcare professionals, IMGs or those Nigerians who were born or trained here in the UK.

## FROM THE REGIONS/CHAPTERS:

The London Chapter of MANSAG under the leadership of Dr. Jide Menakaya held its inaugural meeting on 23rd November 2022. Attendees considered the chapter should focus on supporting, mentorship and sponsoring colleagues who are in transitional phases of their career. These will include doctor transiting to the UK from Nigeria, those transiting to Middle grade, consultant grade, OOPE or any other manner of professional transition. The models for support could be individualised or in groups.

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The Manchester Chapter of MANSAG held its New Year Party on 28th January 2023 at the Roots Restaurant on Hyde Road in Manchester (Roots is owned by one of our members - a Nigerian doctor and his wife - and I personally recommend it to anyone relishing a tasty Nigerian meal). This was not just a party as important discussions also happened. The Chapter is looking at ways of increasing the visibility and accessibility of MANSAG to Nigerian doctors who arrive to write their PLAB examination in Manchester. Attendees expressed the desire to see greater collaboration between MANSAG and other professional Nigerian bodies in the UK.

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

Monday 20th February 2023 - MANSAG executives will be having a meeting with GMC CEO & team to discuss ways of working collaboratively in supporting Nigerian healthcare professionals. If you have any point, you would like MANSAG to raise or discuss at the meeting kindly email it to [@president@mansag.org](mailto:@president@mansag.org)

Saturday 4th March 2023 - The London Chapter of MANSAG is hosting a social/networking event between 1pm to 4pm at 900 High Road, North Finchley, London. N12 9RY. Tickets cost £10-20 only. Please register at: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/london-mansag-reborn-networking-social-event-tickets-541071237637>

Saturday, 6th May 2023 - The Manchester Chapter of MANSAG will hold a virtual Educational Event from 9:30am - 1:00 pm. Details will be announced later.

Saturday, 13th May 2023 - Annual Scientific & Educational Symposium/Charity Ball in Lincolnshire.

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There is a full list of upcoming events in the attachment titled MANSAG CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2023. Some of the dates are TBC (to be confirmed). Don't forget to look on the MANSAG website - <https://mansag.org/> - for up-to-date information.

That's it for now my friends. Until next time, look after yourselves.

Ijabla Raymond  
Editor, The MANSAG Newsletter



M:



W <http://www.mansag.org>

**MANSAG proudly Nigerians**

"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation." Herman Melville.

View my profile on [LinkedIn](#)

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