



## A Brief History of ANPA

In this brief historical account of ANPA, the first tribute that must be paid goes to Dr. Iheanacho Emeruwa, a busy internist and a board certified Obstetrician-Gynecologist who may be accurately referred to as “the founder of ANPA”. He, more than anyone else spear-headed the research and the labor-intensive tasks that made the birth of ANPA possible. His son’s bedroom was ANPA’s first business office; his wife, Meg, was the first manager of ANPA’s secretariat, and he himself was ANPA’s first Executive Director. Working very closely with Dr. Emeruwa, during the gestational period of ANPA, were Drs. Olusegun Salako, Dapo Popoola, Julius Kpaduwa, and Yinka Soroye. Dr. Soyore was in fact the author of the first directory of Nigerian physicians in the US and Canada.

Using the directory of known Nigerian Physicians in the US, this committee of five, arranged the first meeting of Nigerian physicians at Anaheim, California in 1995 with Mr. Randall Robinson of TransAfrica as the keynote speaker. At this inaugural gathering of ANPA’s founding members, Dr. Matthias Okoye, a Pathologist, was elected President by a simple majority vote. As ANPA’s first President, he did the best he could, to hold the new association together in spite of its little or no resources. During that first year, ANPA was a particularly vulnerable infant entity with a very malleable destiny.

The second ANPA “convention” was purposely held in New York City—the place that had the greatest concentration of Nigerian Physicians at the time. During this rather tumultuous and larger gathering, the air was full of both promise as well as lots of doubts about the fate of ANPA. At the end and almost unanimously Dr. S.K. Bosu, a Pediatrician was elected as the second President of ANPA. The other very significant achievement at that convention was an agreement on the major tenets of ANPA emerging Bylaws—including the order of succession. Once again, following the NYC convention, there was very little that went on until the third convention in Chicago which turned out to be one of the most consequential of all ANPA’s conventions, in many respect. The most vivid account of what happened at this third ANPA Convention of 1997 (in Chicago) is accurately reflected in the official account that Dr. Alphonsus Obayuwana gave five years later—in Atlanta, Georgia. In that report, he wrote:

“As I remember it, the month was June, the place was Chicago, and the occasion was the Third Annual Convention of the Association of Nigerian Physicians in the Americas – ANPA. Our organization was just two years old, but its future seemed so full of promise. As the arriving ANPA members started to gather for our traditional Friday night reception, the exuberance of the crowd suddenly became dampened by the news that the then President of ANPA, Dr. Bosu, had resigned; and more surprisingly, that he, Dr. Bosu, would not even be present at that annual ANPA Convention to explain the reasons for his resignation. Everyone was baffled and some were actually dumbfounded. In compliance with the Bylaws, the Presidency was thrust upon Dr. Umoren; and by a unanimous vote, without my ever seeking the office; I became the President-elect.’

The reason for Dr. Bosu’s resignation was never quite clear; and naturally, there were as many rumored versions of his reasons as there were members in ANPA. Recognizing the emerging danger of possible disillusionment among the ANPA membership, Dr. Obayuwana’s first official act (as the President-Elect) at the end of the Chicago Convention was to write a personal letter to each and every member of ANPA. In that letter he promised that he would never resign from the position to which he had been elected. As proof of his commitment to any equivocating ANPA members, he made a lump sum payment of his ANPA annual dues (\$365 X 5) for the next five years as a personal promise and guarantee that he would serve his term of office in full—3 years as President-elect and 2 years as President.

As evident in the above account, Dr. Aqua Don Umoren, an Obstetrician and Gynecologist, became the third and the longest serving President of ANPA—one remaining year of Dr. Bosu’s abbreviated tenure plus his own 2-year regular full tenure. He was very active and resolute in his commitment to keep ANPA alive, investing not only time, but also personal resources. Dr. Umoren, who was once a Commissioner for Health in Aqwa Ibom State, served ANPA tirelessly and very generously with all his experiential and intellectual endowments. He was very affable and ANPA’s meetings under his presidency were full of memorable levity.

The fourth ANPA President was Dr. Alphonsus Obayuwana, an Obstetrician and Gynecologist, a Major in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, an expert in Parliamentary procedures, whose skills in running meetings and insistence on strict adherence to parliamentary procedure, introduced discipline and decorum to the conduct of ANPA meetings. He was also the chief architect of ANPA’s current Bylaws. Commenting recently, during this 25th anniversary celebration, Dr. Obayuwana said: “Though we have learned how to run, we should not forget how to walk. We must always remember that before we ever walked, we first had to crawl. The former reminds us not to forget the basics while the latter keeps us ever humble.”

Our Fifth President was the late Dr. Olusegun Rasaki Salako, an Obstetrician and Gynecologist, who was also the first and longest serving Treasurer of ANPA, the first Medical Missions Chief, and whose tenure as president was during a very challenging time for ANPA. The association was struggling financially after a failed attempt to hire a full time paid Executive Director and Dr. Salako's cool and calm disposition was very consequential and largely responsible for convincing ANPA members to come to the rescue of the association. Spontaneous donations, voluntary pledges, and imposed levies of \$500-\$5000 by ANPA Board members were very frequent and common at the time. In retrospect, one cannot but marvel about those acts of collective love and individual generosity that saved ANPA—and for which especially Dr. Festus Dada, Dr. Ngozi Nwaneri, and Dr. Jide Bamigboye must never be forgotten.

Our Sixth President was Dr. Emmanuel Okafor, an internist and Gastroenterologist. He broke the monopoly of Obstetricians as ANPA presidents. Dr. Okafor, for the first time in ANPA history, introduced the use of professional secretarial help to manage ANPA secretariat affairs—thus consolidating and centralizing all transactions relating to ANPA. Our seventh President was Dr. Yele Aluko, an Internist and Interventional Cardiologist. It was during his presidency that ANPA became of age. He famously insisted on a business model for ANPA's growth. One board retreat was devoted to coaching members on how to bring value to ANPA and also bring ANPA's values to its members.

Our Eighth President was Dr. Julius Kpaduwa, an Obstetrician and Gynecologist, whose passion was about making ANPA relevant in Nigeria. His presidency made it possible to have the first ANPA convention in Nigeria in the year 2009 (ANPA 15th convention). It was under his presidency that ANPA began collaborative efforts with the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), a relationship that has since been continuously strengthened. Our Ninth President was Dr. Fiemu Nwariaku, a General Surgeon, who has also served as the President of the American Association of Academic Surgeons. His tenure began a very aggressive and productive advocacy activity of ANPA. It was during his tenure that we succeeded in convincing Nigerian stakeholders about changes in curriculum for medical education. Also, during his tenure ANPA played a pivotal role in drafting a new curriculum for medical schools.

Our Tenth President was Dr. Michael Etomi, an Internist and Nephrologist. His tenure introduced ANPA to the Nigerian media, commercial Business and healthcare partners which greatly helped in promoting ANPA's good work and name in Nigeria.

Our Eleventh President was Dr. Nkem Chukwumerije, an Internist and Hospitalist, whose passion for service in our homeland led to the creation of ANPA Week. He organized the Week to include 3 parts: patient care, provision of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs for physicians, and Advocacy for health care in Nigeria. The Twelfth

President was Dr. Johnson Adeyanju, an Internist and author. His presidency emphasized interdisciplinary cooperation and he solidified the ANPA week concept, and expanded the number of ANPA chapters.

Currently on this 25th anniversary year of ANPA, we are now functioning under the Thirteenth President, Dr. Charmaine Emelife, an Internist and Nephrologist. She is the first female President of ANPA, the first ANPA President to be recognized with a Chieftaincy title in Nigeria, and the first ANPA president to successfully establish partnerships with women organizations in Nigeria. Her intellectual depth and physical elegance is a testament to the continuing wisdom of ANPA choice of leadership.

Throughout the first 25 years of ANPA existence, there is perhaps no one who has tirelessly worked and contributed so much behind the scene to promote a culture of peace, cooperation, camaraderie, and intellectual generosity within ANPA than Dr. Ajovi Scott-Emuakpor—everybody's best friend and favorite uncle. For this reason he has recently been rightly and deservedly honored with an annual lecture named specifically after him.

Perhaps the most significant phenomenon in the 25 year history of ANPA is the steadfastness of its members—particularly those members who gathered on that first faithful day in Anaheim to assemble this Association. Since its founding, the members of ANPA, have been very determined never to allow this Association to fail—in spite of a number of challenging times in its 25-year history. In medical parlance, when ANPA gasped for breath, the members provided it with oxygen. When it stumbled and could not walk, the members provided crutches to move it along. When it went into “shock”, the members provided fluids for volume replacement and vasoactive drugs to keep ANPA's tissues perfused. ANPA owes its survival and growth not only to a very competent and selfless leadership, but more importantly, to its general membership that is so committed and dedicated to a common goal, so diverse in interest yet so purposeful in the common vision of “A HEALTHIER NIGERIA IN A HEALTHIER WORLD”.