

UNITY IN DIVERSITY, UNITY IN CONCERT AND REGRESSION POTENTIAL

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Presented at the 52nd Annual Scientific Conference/AGM/Elections of the Nigeria Society of Physiotherapy (NSP) Edo 2012

November 1, 2012

Good morning distinguished ladies and gentlemen. A hearty and warm welcome to the Chairman of the Opening Ceremony, Professor Chukwu Onyebuchi, Minister of Health. We appreciate and welcome our special Guest of Honor, Comrade Adams Aliyu Oshomhole, the Governor of Edo State. The Nigeria Society of Physiotherapy (NSP) is indeed honored by the presence of these two eminent gentlemen at this 52nd Annual Scientific Conference/AGM and elections.

I thank the local organizing committee, Edo Chapter NSP under the chairmanship of Mrs. Chigozie Obaseki for the herculean planning and efforts in organizing the 52nd Conference and AGM. On a personal note, I thank Mrs. Obaseki for her constant communication with me in the early stages and especially as the events of Hurricane Sandy evolved and prevented me from travelling out of New York to be with you in person at the opening ceremony. I appreciate the honor bestowed by inviting me to be the guest speaker. It is my privilege to accept to speak at such an august gathering of Physiotherapists. Thank you.

NSP came into existence 52 years ago through the dogged determination and perseverance of the pioneers of the Physiotherapy profession who toiled and sweated to give us our humble beginnings. Over the 52 years of its existence, NSP has rocked forwards and backwards, sometimes taking a step forward but two steps backwards for some reason or the other. The profession and NSP are intertwined and inter-related. The

existence of one entity has been directly linked to the survival of the other over the years and it is no different today.

The above preamble leads to my choice of today's topic: "UNITY IN DIVERSITY, UNITY IN CONCERT AND REGRESSION POTENTIAL. Ladies and gentlemen of the NSP, there is no doubt that we are a diverse group. Let's consider how diverse we are. We are diverse in the following respects:

- ❖ Gender
- ❖ Ethnicity
- ❖ Socio-economic background
- ❖ Religion
- ❖ Locale of origin—urban, suburban, rural
- ❖ Locale for practicing—hospital, clinic or academia (teaching, research or administration)
- ❖ Exposure—national, and international
- ❖ Universities attended (Ibadan, Lagos, OAU, Kano, Maiduguri, etc)

Why do I care about diversity? Diversity is a word that could have negative connotations but I choose to understand the inherent powers and attributes of diversity and the positive qualities of a group being diverse in its constitution or make-up. It is a good thing to be diverse as long as the constituents of the group embrace, understand and utilize their diversity as a source of strength that nurtures their growth and focuses on how well they grow.

Before going further, let me issue these disclaimers

1. I will not pull any punches
2. I do not take prisoners
3. I am not delivering a doom and gloom speech

4. I am one of you and not an outsider from the diaspora. I am here to “call a spade a spade”. I graduated from University of Ibadan Physiotherapy program in 1977, spent my NYSC year in Kano, thereafter worked in Ogbomosho, Ibadan and Ilesha. While in Ibadan, I travelled with the IICC football team during their weekend games as part of their medical service corps. I believe I do qualify as one of you.

I will use NSP and the profession of Physiotherapy interchangeably in this speech. In looking at or thinking about Physiotherapy, we need to ask some questions, which everyone present can answer given each person’s particular situation.

- ❖ Where did we start from?
- ❖ How did we start?
- ❖ What dreams did we have?
- ❖ Were the dreams realized or put aside?
- ❖ What were the impediments, obstacles, catalysts, enhancers? Were they resolved or embraced?

Again despite diverse situations at the onset, the end result was that each person qualified as a Physiotherapist from whichever institution of learning they studied at. This is another point of diversity. The point being made is that diversity is a part of our existence in our small community. It is also an intrinsic part of the larger world around us. I am assuming that we can all appreciate how diverse we are, BUT the next question is: WHAT DO WE DO WITH THE DIVERSITY inherent in us? We can either embrace the diversity or chose not to embrace it. One track yields positive dividends while not embracing diversity can result in lots of misunderstanding, controversy, mutual distrust and problems, as has been proven in other communities.

Let us remember that our diversity augurs well for our unity. We must make concerted efforts to be positively like-minded. When we do this, it augurs well for us because we then have the ability to better focus on essentials, plan forthrightly, and execute plans in a timely manner.

Having talked a bit on diversity let me direct your attention to the issue of “concerted efforts” which I touched upon while speaking about diversity. Ordinarily, diversity and concerted efforts could be at odds or at cross-purposes. BUT if we are cognizant of the possible negative outcomes or positive outcomes that can result from making or not making the choice to work together, the rational choice would be to work together for good. This is where the dilemma comes in. How do we remind ourselves that personal egos and exclusively personal agenda have no place in the scheme of things when you want to build the success of an organization? I say this is easy: Leave your ego at the door before deliberations. Be ready to meet others at least halfway, and realize that “my way or the highway” kinds of thinking and sensibility are more likely to cause problems than yield solutions.

Other dilemmas within our community of Physiotherapy that do not allow for concerted efforts to be manifest include the following:

- ❖ I want to emphasize to everyone present and those not in attendance that by training, we are all Physiotherapists first. The fact that we decide to be diverse in the stratifications chosen should be seen as a source of strength that could be used to develop an inclusive community rather than elements or attributes that foster divisiveness.
- ❖ We need to stop being small-minded and territorial. Yes, “the big fish in the small pond” mentality still exists in our various institutions and should become a thing of the past.
- ❖ We need to remember NSP and Physiotherapists in our not too recent past and the legacy they tried to develop. We need to learn from our history when we clung to factors that divided us rather than those that united us. Let me paraphrase what I mean as follows: “Remember yesterday, it is our history. This is history to be researched and shape our tomorrows with.”
- ❖ Remember the missteps and mistakes so as not to repeat them.

- ❖ Remember the strides and achievements of the past as we work to build our tomorrows.
- ❖ Remember today, which is a window to our tomorrows. Build on today's successes for a better and greater tomorrow. "Today's successes are the building blocks for tomorrow's achievements."

As I said at the beginning of this speech, I am not just speaking about doom and gloom. We need to look critically at ourselves. To a large extent, we continue to neglect one of our strengths. Let me remind us of when Physiotherapy was referred to as "an art". The profession has now evolved into both an art and science. This primarily can be related to scientific developments and innovations that occurred in our more recent history. My suggestion is: "find a balance between the art and science of Physiotherapy and master both to ensure enhanced productivity while keeping up with evolving trends."

Just so we do not digress or forget, now, I would like all of us to take a look, and reflect on a mathematical relationship that exists between diversity, concerted effort, and regression potential. Simply stated: the sum of our concerted planning, efforts and execution, is inversely proportional to the regression potential. In other words: if we do not eschew and stop our internal strife and estrangement, the larger external battles will engulf and surmount us.

We are 52 years old. We cannot continue having "growing pains" or "teething problems" in our middle age, to the detriment of our potentially great future. Let us stop wasting time, effort and energy on pettiness and being small-minded. The needs of our society are larger and more significant than our individual needs. Our strength lies in uniting despite our diversity, forming a collectivity, a community that positively harnesses and expeditiously utilizes our talents and work to create something unique and well-suited to solving the problems that our society faces.

In rounding up, I would want to make reference to possible pathways for us as Physiotherapists and the NSP to focus on and have healthy debates that lead us to positive

and functional resolutions. These are pathways that I think we should highlight and evaluate as a society, and plans that we can execute to foster our growth and relevance in the future healthcare community that would evolve.

1. Let us celebrate each other and our individual/group achievements
2. Put aside personal egos
3. Encourage and develop conflict resolution strategies in our hospital and university departments.
4. Make, renew, and rebuild external liaisons and relationships with individual, professional, governmental and social groups.
5. Make each and every contact an opportunity to network and highlight Physiotherapy. BUT remember that you are both representative of yourself first and the community of Physiotherapy. Others see you in who you are: your carriage, persona, and character.
6. We need to develop and implement exchange programs for both students and Physiotherapists of all stripes both within and outside Nigeria.

PATHWAYS

WITH the recent advent of promotions, elevations, research grant funding that individual Physiotherapists (at home and abroad) have achieved, our future is indeed very bright. But we also need to identify and foster private-public collaborations both in Nigeria and internationally. Let's utilize the advantage that we have Physiotherapists within and outside Nigeria who can facilitate this pathway. This also further makes it imperative that our warring factions either in our hospitals and/ or university departments resolve their differences, put aside personal egos and work together for the good of the physiotherapy profession.

Another area which has already started is the DPT program. At present we have embraced a U.S. based institution and the wheels are rolling. There is no reason why our universities in Nigeria cannot develop their curriculums to include DPT programs. Of

course I understand the administrative steps that need to be in place which are not insurmountable.

Research (both clinical and experimental) need to be the order of the day. The status quo should no longer be enough or satisfactory. Let us challenge ourselves in our hospitals, clinics and universities to engage in research of one form or the other, which can be either small, medium, or large-scale in nature and will contribute to the knowledge pool in Physiotherapy. We should ensure the quality of the research is impeccable and will withstand peer-review scrutiny.

Of course the next item that comes to mind is funding and funding sources. We need to identify funding sources and write proposals for funding that passes muster. We have to actively and vigorously follow-up our funding proposals to ensure granting of such funds.

As little as this might realize or bring in, the NSP needs to be innovative with membership drive and retention of dues-paying members. There are some monies due from both members in the diaspora and some in Nigeria. The incoming executive will need to figure out how to reach out to all non-paying members to pay up. Other innovative methods of fundraising need to be developed by the NSP.

Another pathway that NSP needs to focus on is our “Physiotherapy Practice Act” and “Code of Ethics”. This needs revision to conform with current trends and ideas. It needs to be a living document that evolves with changing times.

This is an issue that might be new in our lingo, although we are used to its deployment for other purposes, as with what one of our past Ministers for Information encouraged us to do for our dear nation: **BRANDING**. The Physiotherapy brand has been in existence for ages, but has not been particularly publicized or highlighted. Our most precious tool, implement or whatever name you want to call it is “our hands”. We use our hands to touch, feel, palpate, stretch, massage, manipulate, mobilize, etc. How come we have not branded and made this synonymous with practicing “Physiotherapy”? “Our

Hands aid Healing and Recovery”. We need to remind ourselves, our patients and others who we come in contact with how important our hands are in Physiotherapy management and treatment procedures. We need to “brand” our hands and directly brand Physiotherapy.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for listening to me speaking on “Unity in diversity, Unity in concert and regression potential”.

If you do not remember all of what I tried to put across, please remember to:

- ❖ Eschew the negative aspects of diversity;
- ❖ Extol, embrace and practice the virtues inherent in diversity to forestall the potential for regression of our dear profession—Physiotherapy.

Thank you.

May God bless you.

Long live the Physiotherapy profession.