

HAKHEEM S.



Hakeem was a 45-year-old Nigerian photographer, who had made his reputation photographing Nigerian actors and actresses.

He developed a poorly differentiated (anaplastic) malignant soft tissue sarcoma of the right-side of his head in 1995, which was treated in Nigeria by surgical resection of his right ear and scalp with consequent destruction of the right facial nerve (the nerve that moves the facial muscles). The Nigerian surgeons rotated flaps of skin and fat from his scalp to close the ensuing defect.

Despite this treatment, he developed two huge nodules of recurrence, which were almost as big as his own head. The first of these protruded from the right side of his head and destroyed the skull bone and part of the vertebral column on that side of his face and neck. It infiltrated into the brain substance underneath. The second was on the left side on the back of his head and neck. It was fixed to the muscles of his back.

Hakeem went to England in search of treatment and by the time of his operation with Iain Hutchison, he could barely hold his head up with the weight of the two malignant tumors. He underwent surgical resection of both tumor masses, but the tumor on the right could not be completely removed because of the risk of damaging small blood vessels to vital structures in the brain. His treatment in the UK was funded by donations raised by a collection of well-known British actors, directors and impresarios. His operation lasted sixteen hours with both Dr. Hutchison and a neurosurgeon, Ian Sabin, working together. Hakeem required a massive blood transfusion because of the large blood supply of the tumor. His brain was covered at the end of the operation with muscle and skin from the right-side of his back (latissimus dorsi muscle).

He made an excellent recovery from the operation and he was offered chemotherapy and radiotherapy in the UK. One more, the British actors offered to pay for this. But he declined their offer and returned to Nigeria to be with his family and friends. Without adjuvant treatment, Hakeem died 36 months after surgery.