

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana

90th Anniversary Launch Ceremony

Akropong | May 2025

“Science. Impact. Legacy – 90 Years of Pharmaceutical Excellence”

[Salutation...]

We gather here today in Akropong to reflect on the weight of responsibility that comes with ninety years of existence as a profession and as a Society.

In December 1935, when Pharm. William Ayiah Hansen and his colleagues brought together the Gold Coast Pharmacists and Druggists Union and the Chemists Defence Association, they were not responding to convenience. They were responding to necessity. The profession at the time was fragmented, its voice diluted, its influence limited. Yet through conviction and careful engagement, they forged unity, and from that unity emerged the Pharmaceutical Society of the Gold Coast, formally recognized and incorporated in 1936. That moment matters, because it reminds us that the strength of pharmacy in this country has never been accidental. It has always been constructed through organization, through advocacy, and through a clear understanding that a profession without structure cannot command respect.

When Ghana attained independence and the Society evolved into the Pharmaceutical Society of Ghana in 1957, it carried forward not just a new name, but a renewed mandate to contribute meaningfully to nation-building through science, through service, and through professional integrity. It is therefore fitting that today, as we launch our 90th anniversary, we do so with clarity of purpose and with a theme that captures both our journey and our ambition:

“Science. Impact. Legacy – 90 Years of Pharmaceutical Excellence”

It reminds us that everything we have built and everything we must yet build, rests on three inseparable pillars.

SCIENCE

Science is the foundation upon which pharmacy stands. From the earliest days of the Society, there was a deliberate effort to promote structured education, to standardize training, and to ensure that those who practiced pharmacy did so on the basis of knowledge and competence. That insistence on science distinguished the pharmacist from the trader, the professional from the opportunist, and laid the groundwork for a profession that commands trust.

But beyond systems and structures, science, impact and legacy have been carried forward by individuals who chose excellence over mediocrity and service over comfort. We remember pioneers like Pharm. Samuel Benson Adjepong, the first Chief Pharmacist of the Ministry of Health, whose work helped shape pharmaceutical services in the early years of our nation. We recall the dedication of Pharm. Samuel Addotey Allotey, who served this Society in various capacities with distinction for nearly two decades, helping to build its administrative and governance backbone. We remember Pharm. Bernard Eugene Dua Ofori-Atta, whose leadership as President came at a time when the profession required consolidation and direction.

And we cannot speak of science without celebrating the remarkable lineage of pharmacist-scientists who have carried Ghana's name far beyond our borders. Pharm. Professor Albert Nii Tackie stands prominently among them, a scholar whose work in pharmaceutical education and medicinal chemistry helped position Ghana within the global scientific community and demonstrated that our intellectual contributions could stand shoulder to shoulder with the best in the world. That same spirit of innovation is reflected in Pharm. Dr. Paul Lartey, whose establishment of Lagray Chemical Ltd marked a bold step toward local production of active pharmaceutical ingredients, and whose work in improving the palatability of zinc tablets addressed a practical barrier to effective treatment. It is equally evident in the pioneering efforts of Pharm. Francis Martei Dickson, whose formulation of Dick's Plasma provided a locally developed solution for managing shock in haemorrhage, trauma, and surgical cases, at a time when reliance on imported alternatives was the norm.

That tradition of excellence has not faded; it has deepened and expanded across generations. We see it also in Professor Kwasi Adomako Ohemeng, whose leadership in the development of Omadacycline, a novel antibiotic, marks a significant scientific breakthrough in the global fight against antimicrobial resistance. And we recognize Professor Cynthia Amaning Danquah, whose work in pharmacology and natural product research continues to unlock new possibilities in the fight against diseases such as tuberculosis.

These individuals, and many others, did not merely practice pharmacy. They defined it. Yet science alone does not justify our existence. Science must be translated into outcomes. It must solve problems. It must respond to the realities of our people. And that is where impact becomes critical.

IMPACT

For decades, pharmacists in Ghana have been embedded in the everyday health experiences of our communities. In many parts of this country, the pharmacy is the first point of care. It is where people go not only for medicines, but for guidance, reassurance, and immediate intervention.

Through the years, pharmacists have supported public health programmes, contributed to disease control efforts, ensured the integrity of medicines supply chains, and safeguarded the quality of medicines available to the Ghanaian public. They have done so in hospitals, in industry, in regulatory institutions, and in communities—often without recognition, but never without impact.

From leadership in academia to roles in public administration and policy, pharmacists have helped shape institutions, influence governance, and contribute to national discourse. This breadth of contribution reflects a profession that is not confined to dispensing medicines, but one that is deeply embedded in the broader fabric of national development.

We see this clearly in figures like Dr. Delese Mimi Darko, whose journey from national regulator to continental leadership as the first Director-General of the African Medicines Agency reflects not only personal distinction, but Ghana's growing influence in global health governance. In the same policy and systems space, Dr. (Mrs.) Martha Gyansa-Lutterodt stands out as a towering figure, whose over three decades of public service helped shape Ghana's pharmaceutical policy architecture.

That same spirit of nation-building is embodied in leaders like Dr. Kofi Nsiah-Poku, a pioneer of local pharmaceutical manufacturing whose work through Kinapharma has enabled the production of over 150 essential medicines, significantly strengthening Ghana's medicine security. His contributions extend beyond industry into global health, having served as a World Health Organization advisor on malaria treatment, and into national development through leadership within the Association of Ghana Industries—recognition that rightly earned him the Order of the Volta. Similarly, the legacy of Mr. Ernest Bediako Sampong stands as a testament to the transformative power of pharmaceutical enterprise. From a single retail outlet, he built Ernest Chemists Limited into a major force in manufacturing, distribution, and access,

helping to ensure that quality, affordable medicines reach communities across Ghana and beyond.

Together, these contributions reflect a profession that is not confined to dispensing medicines, but one that is deeply embedded in the broader fabric of national development—driving innovation, supporting economic growth, and advancing public health at scale. And yet, we must be honest with ourselves. We have built a profession that is accessible, but not fully integrated; trusted, but not fully leveraged. The result is a system that does not benefit fully from what pharmacists are trained to offer. A health system that overlooks its pharmacists is a health system that is operating below its potential.

Through deliberate effort, pharmacists have extended services into communities, often filling critical gaps in access. Through cooperative models and professional support systems, including financial mechanisms that enable pharmacists to establish practices in underserved areas, we have contributed to expanding the reach of healthcare beyond traditional facilities.

But access must now evolve into structured impact. Community pharmacies must not remain peripheral—they must become integral to primary healthcare delivery, with defined roles, clear standards, and formal recognition.

LEGACY

Beyond science and impact lies legacy. And legacy is where the true test of leadership lies. Our predecessors left us a profession that is organized, respected, and nationally relevant. They built institutions, defined ethics, and secured a place for pharmacy within the national conversation on health.

But legacy is not preserved by maintaining what exists. It is extended by building beyond it. As we look ahead, the next decade must be one of deliberate transformation. We must strengthen local pharmaceutical manufacturing so that Ghana is not overly dependent on external supply chains. We must elevate community pharmacy into a structured component of primary healthcare. We must deepen clinical pharmacy practice within hospitals so that pharmacists are directly influencing patient outcomes. And we must ensure that our regulatory systems are strong enough to guarantee quality, while flexible enough to support innovation and growth.

This is not ambition for its own sake. It is necessity.

Because the future of healthcare in Ghana will demand more coordination, more efficiency, and more accessible care. And pharmacy must be positioned at the centre of that future.

To government, we say this: the integration of pharmacists into primary healthcare is not optional—it is essential. Policies that recognize and utilize pharmacists more effectively will improve access, reduce pressure on hospitals, and enhance overall health outcomes.

To the public, we reaffirm that pharmacists remain one of the most accessible and trusted healthcare professionals in this country. But that trust must be deepened through engagement—because pharmacy is not only about medicines; it is about care.

And to my colleagues, I say this: the next chapter of this profession will not be written by history alone. It will be written by our actions, our unity, and our willingness to lead. Ninety years ago, a small group of pharmacists chose unity over division. That decision shaped everything we are today.

Thank you.