Gen. Elly Tumwine

He said although he was no working relationship he had with him as the deputy commander of function, said Ochola and Sabiiti were faced with a challenge of Kayihura asked that it be framed and he hangs it at his home.

Fake hepatitis B vaccine seized in city pharmacy

By Carol Kasujja

A week after *Sunday Vision* exposed the sale of counterfeit hepatitis B vaccine, a key suspect linked to the crime has been arrested.

Mackline Biira, 30, a business woman and owner of Mackie Laboratory Supplies in Kampala, was arrested yesterday in an operation carried out by the National Drug Authority (NDA), together with the Police.

She was picked up from Twese Plaza in downtown Kampala, with cartons of what has since been identified as fake vaccine, which was being sold to several hospitals and clinics countrywide. She was arrested while sanctioning a receipt to one of the inspectors who pretended to be buying the vaccines.

The search also yielded a list of clinics and hospitals she had supplied.

"After the announcement of fake vaccines in the country, one of her clients alerted us and, indeed, we have found stock of fake vaccines. Biira has refused to tell us where she gets the vaccines from, but we are hopeful she will open up," Muhammed Lukwago, the NDA central region inspector of drugs, said.

Lukwago expressed worry that many people had since received the fake vaccine, saying the suspect supplies many private clinics.

"We are going to charge Biira with handling of counterfeit medicine. She is not a medical personnel. Through her, we are likely to arrest more people who are involved in this scam," Lukwago said.

A press release signed by the secretary to NDA, Donna Kusemererwa, shows that other suspects have been arrested in relation to the matter and are being held by the Police to assist with investigations.

Talking to *New Vision*, some of Biira's customers said they did not know they were buying fake vaccines because for a long time, they had been getting vaccines from her.

"I cannot even tell the difference between a fake one and the genuine one," a buyer who preferred anonymity said.

NDA appeals

NDA has appealed to all healthcare practitioners and providers and the public to be vigilant and report any suspicious drugs, dealers and drug outlets. Dealers have been urged to desist from purchasing drugs from unlicensed suppliers.

On Wednesday, while interacting with NDA officials over a petition on the regulation of pharmacies in Uganda, the parliamentary committee on health directed all private health facilities to suspend vaccination of hepatitis B, pending investigations into fake vaccines on the market.

The committee expressed concern that the continued vaccination of unsuspecting Ugandans with fake vaccines posed a great health risk.

According to NDA, the 10ml vial labelled 'NOT FOR SALE' is exclusively in government hospitals. Private facilities are supposed to have one ml ampoule, which has two green bands on the label. The genuine 10ml vial of hepatitis B vaccine from Serum Institute of India should have a batch number, the manufacture and expiry dates, with a shelf-life of three years.

New Section

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