

Investigation. Health minister, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, says the death will be investigated by the Uganda Dental and Medical Practitioners Council.

BY EMMANUEL AINEBYOONA
eainebyoona@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. The Ministry of Health has apologised for the death of a cancer patient Simon Ekongo which occurred in the compound of Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI) last Monday.

According to a statement issued by the Health minister, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, the death will be investigated by the Uganda Dental and Medical Practitioners Council.

"The investigation is expected to take one week and the public shall be duly informed of the results," Dr Aceng said.

Dr Aceng indicated that the Health ministry regrets the death of cancer patient which occurred on June 12, at the Uganda institute compound.

"Preliminary reports show the patient passed on in a tent, which serves as an area for health education," Dr Aceng added.

According to Ms Florence Okae Akello, a caretaker, the deceased was initially referred from Soroti Regional Referral Hospital to Mulago Hospital. They were sent to Kiruddu Hospital, an auxiliary of Mulago Hospital in the city outskirts of Munyonyo before being referred to UCI complex, close to Mulago main hospital.

The deceased, she said, was not attended to for more than three days until his passing on.

The UCI director, Dr Jackson Orem, has since denied negligence on behalf of his staff, saying the patient was not properly referred by medics at Kiruddu Hospital.

"We acted on humanitarian basis after discovering that a patient had died on our compound. We decided to establish the cause of death and issue a certificate to family because you cannot move a body in this country without a death certificate," Dr Orem told journalists last Wednesday.

He earlier indicated that the pa-

Health ministry apologises for cancer patient death



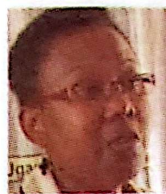
Bereaved. Relatives of Simon Ekongo wait for his body from the mortuary at Uganda Cancer Institute shed, Mulago in Kampala last week. FILE PHOTO

tient was just entrusted to a driver who also dropped him in the compound of UCI instead of taking him to the ward.

"At Kiruddu Hospital, they tested the blood [of the patient] and confirmed that it was acute leukemia, similar to what was earlier suspected [by health workers] at Soroti Hospital," Ms Akello, a breast cancer survivor who volunteers to help other patients, told this newspaper on Tuesday.

The deceased was referred to UCI on June 9. This was a day celebrated locally as Heroes' Day and, therefore, a public holiday and as such health workers were unwilling to receive or treat the critically-ill patient whose referral they faulted

Voices



"The investigation is expected to take one week and the public shall be duly informed of the results."

JANE RUTH ACENG,
HEALTH MINISTER

"We acted on humanitarian basis after discovering that a patient had died on our compound. We decided to establish the cause of death and issue a certificate to family because you cannot move a body in this country without a death certificate."

DR JACKSON OREM,
UCI DIRECTOR

on technical grounds.

"We were brought by an ambulance...we arrived at about 2pm on Friday but upon reaching [at Uganda Cancer Institute], the ambulance driver communicated to unidentified man who said the admission can only be done on Monday," said Ms Akello.

Mr Julius Ekia said his brother died inside a tent on UCI premises at around 2am on Sunday night. "We were told to go to the lower sections of the Cancer Institute and have my brother admitted, but instead the ambulance dropped us at the tent," Mr Ekia said. He added that the records office where registration is done remained closed and neither was there a medical worker to attend to them.