

She had multiple strokes due to sickle cell disease

BY DISMUS BUREGYEYA

Angella Zalwango, 12, from Nyendo near Masaka town, dropped out of school after suffering a stroke four times. The P3 pupil of Zzambogo Primary School, Kasaali in Nyendo, experienced multiple strokes in a space of five years.

According to Dr Vira Otti of Case Medical Centre, Zalwango needs urgent bone marrow transplant in India to save her life.

In the medical report dated October 6, 2017, Dr Otti described Zalwango as a high-risk patient, who needs an urgent bone marrow donor and transplant to save her life.

Kitovu Hospital in Masaka referred Zalwango to Case Medical Centre after her condition worsened.

Zzalwango was diagnosed with sickle cell anaemia in January at Ebenezer Laboratory in Kampala.

She has regularly been treated at this facility from her early childhood and would go for routine medication, including folic acid and multivitamins, as well as treatment for recurrent illnesses such as malaria and anaemia.

When Zalwango was five years old, she suffered a stroke, but she recovered most of her functions. She suffered more strokes in November 2014, July 2016 and June 2017. Zalwango was started on hydroxyurea in April 2014, but the treatment was suspended following a drug reaction that caused sores on her upper and lower limbs. She was restarted on the drugs in August 2016 after the third stroke significantly disabled her.

Zalwango was admitted at Kamutuza Wellsprings Children Centre in Masaka for physiotherapy. She improved and could walk again using crutches. However, this year, Zalwango started developing motor disability. Walking has become difficult and she depends on a caregiver to even get up from a sitting position.

A CT scan and haematologist, as well as neurologist review was recommended and a transfusion programme was also initiated on the advice of a paediatrician at the National Referral Sickle Cell Clinic.

The transplant will cost sh150m, but Zalwango's mother, Miriam Namagembe of Nyendo, cannot afford it. Zalwango broke down in tears as her mother explained how she sold all her valuables to raise money to treat her daughter, but had run out of funds.

"I spend sleepless nights fearing that a fifth stroke might claim my daughter's life," she said.

Namagembe was formerly working at the Masaka-based Medical Research Council, but had to quit to closely monitor her daughter. The family has identified a potential bone marrow donor, who needs to undergo several tests at a cost of at least \$4,000 (about sh14m). They urgently need financial help.

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