

Medical council ordered to probe cancer at Mulago

By Cecilia Okoth

The Ministry of Health has instructed the Uganda Dental and Medical Practitioners Council to probe the incident where a cancer patient seeking medical attention, reportedly died on the Uganda Cancer Institute's (UCI) compound.

Health minister Dr Jane Ruth Aceng on Friday said the council has a week to investigate the matter to its conclusion and, thereafter, inform the public.

"We regret the death of the cancer patient that occurred on June 12 at the UCI compound. This investigation is expected to take one week and the public shall be duly informed of the results," reads Aceng's statement released to the press.

Aceng stressed that the Government is still committed to providing health services the public and called on the public to continue seeking services at the UCI and all other public health facilities.

The council is a government professional organisation whose vision is to protect society from abuse of medical and dental practice, as well as research on human beings in order to effectively contribute to a healthy and productive population.

Part of its mandate is to monitor and exercise general supervision and control over and maintenance of professional medical and dental education standards, to promote the maintenance and enforcement of professional medical and

dental ethics and to exercise general supervision of medical and dental practice at all levels.

According to media reports, a cancer patient who was transported to the institute by an ambulance on referral from Kiruddu Hospital, a Mulago Hospital affiliate, died without being attended to.

The 22-year-old, Simon Ekongo, was referred to Kiruddu, by medical personnel from Soroti Hospital.

In a brief to the media, Dr Victoria Walusansa, the deputy director of the institute, faulted the referral system made by Kiruddu Hospital, saying the patient who was suspected to have leukaemia was not handed over to any staff at the

institute. She blamed the act on negligence on the side of the hospital that referred him.

"We got to learn about the patient after he had died and later got information that he was attended to by a person who was not in uniform," Walusansa said.

Sister Allen Naamala, the principal nursing officer, noted that many medical institutions are fond of 'dumping' patients on arrival, which is an indication of a breakdown of the referral system.

"The procedure is that a patient who has been referred must come with a nurse, who will hand the patient over and also present their documentation before a doctor is invited to attend to them," Naamala said.