

baduka last Thursday evening, asked him to escort him for a business deal

been arrested over the murders.

Wanyana was the fifth woman to fall

ten suspects have

been arrested over the murders.

Wanyana was the fifth woman to fall

by the LDCs that we are enforcing. For us to put security measures, we first sensitise the residents," Mr Ninsiima

arrest them because you have found them moving after 10pm," said Mr Michael Kakembo, a resident.

Medics treat Hepatitis B patients with Aids drugs

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KAMPALA. Due to the shortage of Hepatitis B drugs in government hospitals countrywide, the patients infected with the disease are now being treated with anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs), which are meant for treatment of HIV/Aids.

The patients have complained that ARV drugs have caused them severe side effects.

Today, Uganda joins the rest of the world today to commemorate the Hepatitis Day on the theme: "Eliminate Hepatitis."

The antiretroviral drugs being given to Hepatitis B patients are those that have ingredients of Tenofovir, the drug supposed to treat a viral infection that attacks the liver.

Mr Kenneth Kabagambe, the executive director of the National Organisation for People Living with Hepatitis B, said yesterday that government hospitals are administering a cocktail of Tenofovir, which includes other antiretroviral (ARVs) drugs, other than the monotherapy Tenofovir, which only treats Hepatitis B.

"Majority of our patients are currently taking combination of Tenofovir (ARVs). Only those who can afford the rightful drugs from private facilities are the ones who can access them. The drugs are not supplied in public health facilities but the doctors are told to tell the patients that they are there," Mr Kabagambe told *Daily Monitor* in a telephone interview.

The same charges were made by the patients at an earlier press brief-



KEY ISSUES AT HAND

Treatment cost. In a recent interview with *Daily Monitor*, Cipla Quality Chemicals Industries which manufactures the Hepatitis B drugs locally, indicated that the cost for a one-month dose of Hepatitis B drugs is Shs35,000.

Prevalence. The National Sero Survey 2005 estimates that 3.5 million Ugandans are living with chronic Hepatitis B which is also said to account for 80 per cent of liver cases registered at Uganda Cancer Institute. According to the Ministry of Health, Uganda is a highly endemic country with a 10 per cent national prevalence of Hepatitis B infection.

Treatment. A patient takes ARVs. INTERNET PHOTO

ing yesterday where they called upon the government to start prioritising Hepatitis B treatment the same way they have done with vaccination in order to bring hope to those carrying the disease.

Mulago National Referral Hospital's Hepatitis B clinic has been shifted to Kiruddu Hospital also in Kampala.

When contacted, Mr Nelson Obote, the communications officer of Kiruddu Hospital, first said they had never received Hepatitis B drugs but upon inquiring from the hospital pharmacist about the type of drugs they use to treat Hepatitis B patients, Mr Obote gave a different account.

"We actually treat [Hepatitis B

patients] at the outpatient department," Mr Obote said without committing himself whether they use the right drugs or the detested Tenofovir. He referred *Daily Monitor* to the hospital executive director Dr Charles Kiggundu for further information.

When contacted, Dr Kiggundu was surprised that he was being asked about shortage of Hepatitis B drugs, saying the hospital had never been supplied with the medicines. He further referred *Daily Monitor* to Ministry of Health.

"Where have they been [the drugs]. At Kiruddu?" Dr Kiggundu asked in surprise.

However, Dr Jackson Amone, the commissioner for clinical services at the ministry, had earlier assured *Daily Monitor* that the Hepatitis B drugs were available at Kiruddu Hospital and 39 other districts in the northern region.

"We are aware that some patients are being wrongfully prescribed ARVs by untrained clinical officers, but we have started training them district by district before we start rolling out the treatment of Hepatitis B to other regions," Dr Amone said.

Dr Amone however admitted that clinical officers in those districts where they have not started supplying the drugs are prescribing ARVs to Hepatitis B patients due to lack of a clear system to refer those patients, who qualify to start treatment, to the relevant hospitals.

A different account was also given by the National Medical Stores (NMS) who said they supply Hepatitis B drugs to all government hospitals countrywide. This contrasts with the first statement by the Ministry of Health that it is only Kiruddu Hospital and government hospitals in the 39 districts of northern Uganda where Hepatitis B prevalence is high.