

LETTER OF THE DAY

A medical tribunal to protect consumers needed

EDITOR: The private sector development in medical services has escalated the organisation and 'commodification' of medical care in small and large clinics and hospitals. The rise of private health facilities has drawn away most qualified healthcare professionals from public hospitals into private practice. The purported improved quality of health services in these institutions is an illusion.

Private health sector service costing remains unregulated leading to fraud and extortion. The fraud necessitates a medical tribunal, a medical grievances court for consumer protection.

The idea of a national medical tribunal is not far-fetched. The Land Tribunal established by an Act of Parliament in 2000 has addressed much land related gripes without necessarily going to court. In the same consumer protection

mind set, the medical tribunal structured down to district levels would go a long way in addressing medical service consumers being fleeced off.

Moreover, the most credulous are the majority of our populations that are unable to identify and challenge the hegemony of medical specialists.

In 2016, National Water and Sewerage Corporation (NWSC) suspended their medical service contract with a children's medical facility over falsification of bills. If a tribunal existed, NWSC could have sought justice.

I believe doctors and healthcare practitioners should exercise restraint and perform professionally by conducting proper assessments of patients and where possible, recommend tests and treatment based on immediate necessity. Seeking consent and informing patients the

purpose of tests should embody professional interactions.

A friend recently was stranded with his elderly mother in one of the medical centres in Lira after he was handed a sh2.8m bill for tests and treatment of hypertension for just one night; a condition that was always handled at Oyam hospital for less than sh50,000.

In 2009, Prof Morris Ogenga Latigo was involved in an accident and was rushed to a hospital in Gulu for first aid. He was served with sh9m as his first aid cost. Latigo has disputed this bill and has asked the hospital to go to court.

It is interesting to note that private health service providers never publish costs of their services on the wall, which would enable consumers to rate their affordability.

*Julius Peter Ochen,
Kampala*

PICTURE BY DRAKE SSENTONG

WRITE TO US:

The Letters Editor, P. O. Box 9815 Kampala; or email: letters@newvision.co.ug
Letters must be precise and must be signed. You can also SMS your comment. Type LETTERS [SPACE] YOUR COMMENT then send to 8338

