

# Govt rations ARVs after drug shortages

**Ministry directive.** Dr Anthony Mbonye directed overstocked facilities to redistribute and share the ARVs with those in critical need of the drugs.

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**LIRA.** The Health ministry has directed all health facilities across the country to restrict the quantity of antiretroviral drugs (ARVs) issued to HIV patients citing shortage of supplies at the National Medical Stores (NMS).

The ministry attributes the shortage to overstocking of the drugs at health facilities with few patients, over prescription to stable patients, and exaggeration of ARVs order forms and reports by logistics personnel.

A circular issued by Dr Anthony Mbonye, the acting Director General of Health Services, directs the health facilities in short supply of ARVs to borrow from those with surplus.

“Issue no more than two months of stock of ARVs to stable patients, a number of health facilities are issuing up to six months of ARVs to patients while many others have failed to access this treatment. This is causing disruption of the supply chain system and service delivery in the country,” the circular reads in part.

Dr Mbonye directed overstocked facilities to redistribute and share the ARVs with those in critical need of the drugs. He also directed that new patients should only be started on ARVs after adequate counselling and treatment preparation.

Dr Mbonye, who warned of shortage of Niverapine 50mg tablets and Niverapine syrup for ART and e-MTCT at National Medical Stores, advised health facilities not to recall pre-ART (antiretroviral therapy) patients before their appointment schedules to avoid wastage of government drugs and resources.

“Prescribing ARVs for HIV/TB co-infected individuals should follow the 2016 consolidated guidelines which prioritise fixed dose combination to avoid artificial shortage,” Dr Mbonye wrote.

## Patients borrowing drugs

Pajule Health Centre IV, which is Pader District’s main health facility with 3,369 patients on ARVs, is one of the facilities that are already feeling the pinch of the shortage.

When *Daily Monitor* visited the facility at the weekend, its ambulance had just delivered a consignment of 17 boxes of borrowed ARVs from Acholpii army barracks and Latanya health Centre III.

Dr Jimmy Opee, the officer-in-charge of the facility, said “the boxes have only TDF/3TC EFV drugs (adults) and it serves only 720 patients a month and we are afraid the others may grow resistance to the drugs.”

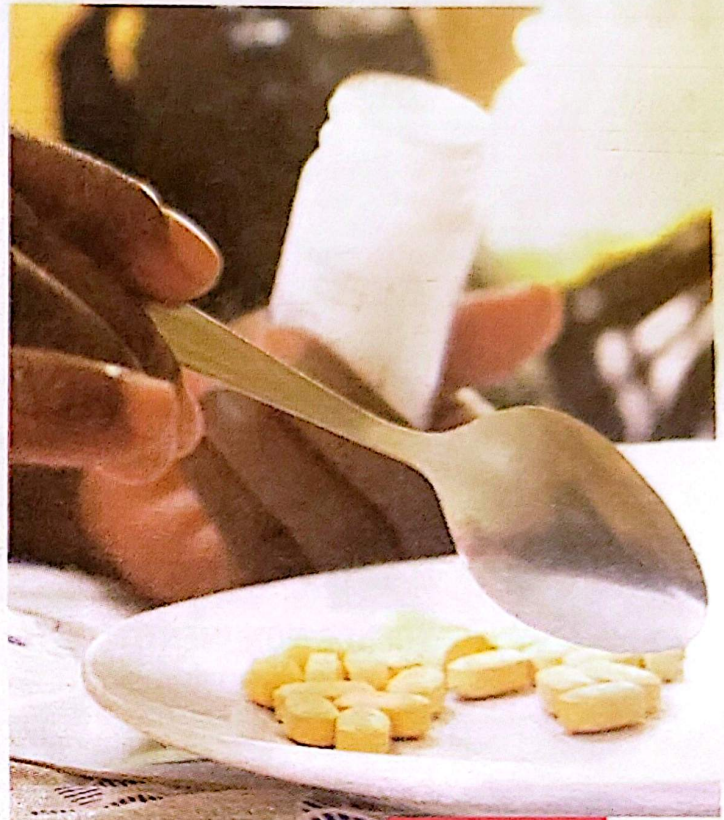
“Issue no more than two months of stock of ARVs to stable patients, a number of health facilities are issuing up to six months of ARVs to patients while many others have failed to access this treatment,”

ANTHONY MBONYE, ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Moses Kamabare, the executive director of NMS, told *Daily Monitor* on Tuesday that the directive was to avoid artificial shortage since ARVs were being mismanaged by the health facilities.

“It is a big mistake that these facilities give patients ARVs for five or even seven months and others miss it, the directive is to alert them to avoid shortage at our stores,” Mr Kamabare said.

Although he insists there is enough



## KEY ISSUE

**Warning.** Dr Mbonye, who warned of shortage of Niverapine 50mg tablets and Niverapine syrup for ART and e-MTCT at National Medical Stores, advised health facilities not to recall pre-ART (antiretroviral therapy) patients before their appointment schedules to avoid wastage of government drugs and resources.

**Stockout.** A woman packs ARVs recently. FILE PHOTO

ARVs in stock at NMS for supplies, Mr Kamabare said many patients cannot meet the complex storage conditions of ARVs of up to six months before it expires and they throw it away.

The circular also directed that every health facility conducts physical head count of patients and ensures proper documentation of consumption of the drugs be carried out monthly at the dispensing points to

ensure regular, accurate and constant supply.