

EDITORIAL

Ensure lab technicians' safety to curb disease

The National Laboratory Biorisk Management audit report 2017, that was released recently, has shown that medical laboratories in the country are exposing health workers to terminal infectious agents from clinical specimens they handle. They later on transmit these infections to patients and the community due to lack of protective gear. The audit, which involved a total of 210 laboratories, put medical laboratory performance at 33 per cent, far below the standard of 50 per cent protection against biological substances which pose a threat to humans. The report notes that in Uganda, the magnitude of the infections, injuries and contamination arising from health laboratories varies from mild to fatal and laboratory health workers continue to be victims to related accidents. This is a worrying situation in a country where the healthcare system is malfunctioning because it increases the cost of treatment. Health laboratories are used to conduct tests usually done on clinical specimens in order to obtain information about the health of a patient as pertaining to the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease.

The Issue:

Safety in the lab

Our view: Our

healthcare system is in shambles, and any additional complication arising from lack of protective gear to medical laboratory technicians would escalate the situation. There is a lot of money spent on non-prioritised things, government should, therefore, deliberately avail such gear to lab technicians because they deal with the core of human existence, life and also given that Uganda is prone to infectious disease outbreaks such as Ebola, Marburg, and cholera, among others.

cholera, among others. Ministry of Health understands better the environment lab technicians ought to operate in, and the accompanying consequences in the event that minimum occupational standards are not followed. This is putting the lives of both the technical people and patients at risk.

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