

# Fake anti-cancer drugs flood market - NDA

**Alert.** NDA says the fake drugs have been on the local market for some time now.

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**KAMPALA.** The National Drug Authority (NDA) has issued an alert over two counterfeit anti-cancer drugs on the market and has arrested a hawkers found selling them near the Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI) at Mulago hospital in Kampala.

In a press statement issued yesterday, the NDA spokesman, Mr Frederick Ssekyana, indicated that the fake drugs, Sutent and Avastin, have been on the Ugandan market for some time now.

"The falsified products were being sold around by unscrupulous dealers near various cancer treatment centres such as the Uganda Cancer Institute," Mr Ssekyana said.

The statement said the branding of the bogus drug indicates it's allegedly manufactured in Sweden by Astrazeneca yet the genuine Sutent drugs are manufactured by renowned pharmaceutical giant Pfizer.

Sutent drugs are supplied as hard gelatin capsules unlike the bluish-grey fraudulent tablets being sold by unscrupulous individuals.

Mr Ssekyana advised cancer patients and their caretakers to be vigilant and seek medical advice from health centres.

"All pharmacies, health providers and the public are advised to exercise caution and vigilance while handling medicines and



**Impounded.** Suspected counterfeit Avastin, the anti-cancer drug that NDA impounded recently. PHOTO BY EMMANUEL AINEBYOONA

to report any illegal suppliers to NDA," he said, adding that anyone found in possession of the illicit drugs would be liable to prosecution.

Ms Donna Asiimwe Kusemerwa, the NDA executive secretary, said the vendor smuggled the drugs into the country from China. Ms Hellen Ndagije, a police directive at Wandegaya Police Station in Kampala, said the

suspect was arrested near the cancer institute on July 17.

"We have submitted his case file to the Director of Public Prosecutions after we completed our investigations," Ms Ndagije said. She said the suspect was selling each packet at Shs3m to unsuspecting patients.

Dr Jackson Orem, the UCI director, yesterday said he is aware of the counterfeit drug, but was

... said: "When patients are told to buy the drugs from private pharmacies, our doctors normally write proper names of these drugs."

He said even those who buy the injectable drugs, they normally bring them to their doctors at UCI for mixing, which counterfeits can be detected, he said they cannot have control over all the drugs patients buy from the market.

Mr Ssekyana said another counterfeit anti-cancer drug being sold is Avastin, which is packaged in plastic jars.

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**Statement.** Frederick Ssekyana, NDA spokesman

He said the genuine Avastin is registered and manufactured by Roche based in Germany and Switzerland and is manufactured as an injection for intravenous use. But the statement indicates that counterfeit Avastin is being presented as bluish-grey tablets.

According to Mr Ssekyana, the packaging indicates that the drug is made in Sweden as AstraZeneca and Turbuhaler under the AstraZeneca trademark.