

World Heart Day

Heart Institute doing a commendable job

Interview. As the world celebrates the World Heart Day today, **Lawrence Ogwal** interviewed Dr John O. Omagino, the executive director Uganda Heart Institute about their work, challenges and achievements.



Dr John O. Omagino, the executive director Uganda Heart Institute

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What is the World Heart Day all about?

It is a decision from the United Nations to alert various governing bodies to a cause. Heart disease is the biggest cause of death in adults. The World Health Organisation put aside that for the world to pay special attention to heart disease. And this year's theme will be "The Heart is the Centre of Health".

What are the major heart problems affecting Ugandans?

Among children, there is a congenital heart effect meaning children are born with defects such as holes in the heart, narrowing in the heart and common example is Tetralogy. One per cent of all deliveries are world over.

Our population is delivering 1.5 million babies per year and 1 per cent times 1 per cent is 15 babies born with heart disease every year.

The other is from infections. We have rheumatic heart disease, 1-3

per cent of children have this infection and it is about living conditions and it because of poverty. The country to handle this is Israel and we have to bring in a UN body. Amongst adults vessels either burst or they clot.

These are many and are still on the increase. Rate or rhythm related to heart diseases like heart blocks and after this. We have common health things like heart failure.

The heart diseases are caused by high salt intake, obesity, hypertension, low exercises.

What are some of the tips for a healthy heart?

Increasing exercise but if you cannot do exercises then you have to decrease the number of fats in your body. Stop alcohol and tobacco and then put in policies of health checks.

With heart disease becoming increasingly expensive to treat abroad, what has Uganda Heart Institute done to help those who cannot afford such treatment?

We want to set up centres at the

regional centres so that everyone can be picked in their districts and only critical cases will be sent to the main centre. The issue of the cost is to establish the standards, the service we get should be the same with the one in China, India, Canada, Russia and South Africa then we look at the cost.

If we worked together to get what is required by the Institute then it would take 5,000 dollars to treat a child with a hole or a patient with a heart attack as opposed to taking a patient abroad where it would cost 20,000 dollars. The cost of taking one patient abroad can serve four patients here and in addition, it increases our capacity. It also gives us training opportunities.

It is very irresponsible for us to encourage people to take heart patients abroad. We have a team that can help here in Uganda, we have world-class people and the facilities but the notion that people have is that you have to travel abroad to get heart treatment which is not true. If I had powers I would actually halt the medical board that has been recommending patients

abroad, the money used can come back home. I have not heard India send any patient to Europe. They treat them at home - India.

What are some of the achievements the Institute has registered?

We have developed a high calibre team that is respected internationally. It is conducting heart operation but the issue is the high caliber team and we have come up with a training programme which is also respected internationally. We are conducting world-class research and publishing it in journals.

When it comes to operations, it has the capacity to diagnose 95 per cent of all heart diseases. It is a big issue and nobody should move out of the country for operations before seeking a diagnosis.

Open heart surgery is routinely being done. The other issue is we have taken the ball to the public; and to the public, the Heart Institute is one of the performing health centres if you go to the streets to ask. That's what the public will tell you.



THE UGANDA HEART INSTITUTE



Hon. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng
Minister of Health



Dr. Magara James
Board Chairman, Uganda Heart Institute



Dr. Omagino O.O. John
Executive Director, Uganda Heart Institute



World Heart Day

Today, the 29th of September 2017, Uganda joins the rest of the World to commemorate World Heart Day and to raise awareness about heart disease.

This year's theme is "At the Heart of Health". We request you to power your heart and inspire millions of people around the world to be heart healthy.

We would like you to know that cardiovascular disease which includes heart disease and stroke is the number one world killer. It is responsible for 17.3 million premature deaths and this is expected to rise by 2030, to 23 million. Currently in Uganda, every 1 in 4 adults has high blood pressure.

Uganda Heart Institute and other Stakeholders are driving this cause this important day. Activities geared to helping

Make sure you know all your health numbers. Make it a point to visit your healthcare professional and ask for a few simple checks. Remember, Knowledge is power!

The good news is that the risk of heart disease can be minimized and modified through everyday heart-healthy behavior such as; stopping smoking (avoiding tobacco), eating and drinking more healthily, doing adequate exercise and controlling your body weight. It is very important that everyone joins the fight!

In addition to regular health visits one should

We therefore ask you to fuel your heart by eating healthy.

Move your heart by exercising regularly.

Love your heart by not smoking tobacco.

And share the power of this message with everyone!