

Drug shops to be phased out

By Betty Amamukirori

Drug shops located in the city, municipalities and town councils have been given one year to either transform into pharmacies or shut down. Donna Kusemererwa, the executive director of National Drug Authority (NDA), has said.

She said pharmacies are stocked with all types of drugs and can sufficiently serve the population.

"The law provides that a drug shop should be located at a one-and-a-half kilometre radius from a pharmacy. So, for now, we are giving them one year to change into pharmacies or close down," she said.

Kusemererwa said they are targeting the city, municipalities and town councils because they already have several pharmacies operating.

While addressing journalists at the Uganda Media Centre, in Kampala yesterday, she said last year, they licensed 478 pharmacies in the country, and noted that with the number, Uganda meets the international pharmacy ratio of one pharmacy to 500 people.

"The only problem is distribution, but we are encouraging some of them to move to high density underserved areas in Kampala,



One of the pharmacies in Nakawa, Kampala. Drug shops have been given one year to transform into pharmacies or shut down. Photo by Ronnie Kijjambu

such as Kasokoso, Makerere Kivulu and other areas countrywide," she said.

She also revealed that by the end of last year, NDA had licensed 11,317 drug shops countrywide of which 396 were in Kampala, but said there are several others that are operating illegally without a licence.

David Nahamya, the director of inspectorate

and enforcement at NDA, explained that the minimum required standard for a drug shop to operate is an enrolled nurse who will be in charge of supervision, while a pharmacy needs to have a pharmacist as one of the directors for it to be licensed.

He said a drug shop sells over-the-counter drugs, usually without a requirement of a prescription, while a

pharmacy deals in a wide range of prescription, including over-the-counter drugs.

When contacted, Jackie Kizito, a pharmacist and the proprietor of Liz-Mark Pharmacy, praised NDA's move, saying they tend to sell the same drugs as drug shops, yet they pay less for the licence.

Currently, drug shops in Kampala pay sh135,000 for a licence while those in the rural



Kusemererwa addressing journalists during a press conference at the Uganda Media Centre yesterday. Photo by Nancy Nanyonga

areas pay sh67,500.

Florence Nabululwa, a resident of Wakiso district, told *New Vision* that some drug shops keep and sell expired drugs.

Kusemererwa said they are also planning to close down unlicensed pharmacies and other drug outlets that will not have acquired licences by the end of this month.

"Any outlet that has not been

licensed in January this year will be asked to close and enforcement action will follow. No new drug shops will be licensed in Kampala and other municipalities since there are pharmacies already sufficiently serving the population," she said.

She urged private clinics to start operating pharmacies so as to serve some of their clients upon prescription.