

Don't restrict citizens' access to public healthcare services

It is absurd and unfortunate that the government plans to enforce a proposal for only national Identity card holders to enjoy healthcare services and public health facilities. If implemented, chances are very high that millions of Ugandans are to be denied access to healthcare.

We all know that processing and acquiring a national identity card in the country is not an easy task and this has left many citizens without the document to date. For those whose IDs had errors or those who lost them, processing a replacement is a real nightmare. Would people in this category not be in position to access medical care services in public hospitals?

Access to medical care is not a luxury that one can choose to forego, it is a basic need or a necessity that government cannot afford to regulate or restrict by desperate measures such as possession of a national ID.

Arlen Specter, an author, once



said: "There is nothing more important than our good health, that is our principal capital asset".

The National Objectives and Directive Principles of State policy, particularly under objective XX of the 1995 Constitution as amended, stipulates that the State shall take all practical measures to ensure the provision of basic medical services to the population. Putting restric-

tions on citizens to access the same is a violation of this very critical provision.

The justifications advanced by some for the proposal such as accountability of medicine supplied and keeping of the patient's records are not convincing enough because the same can be achieved without restricting people from accessing medical care over a national ID.

The national identification process is neither efficient nor perfect. A similar process has been tried with registration of Sim cards and the results are not anything to write home about.

I, therefore, call upon the government and other stakeholders to halt the implementation of this proposal and think of or try other measures of ensuring accountability of medicine supplied to patients without violating the people's right to health.

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