

Prisons takes on hepatitis B

By Petride Mudoofa

Five inmates of Luzira Women's Prison have tested positive for hepatitis B, according to Dr Ruth Pamela Nandaula of Norvik Hospital.

"We have counselled them to prevent the stigma and we are referring them to the hospital because we cannot start them on treatment straight away, since hepatitis B is managed according to the stage of the disease," Nandaula said.

She was officiating at a vaccination campaign to eradicate hepatitis B at Luzira Women's Prison on Friday.

She noted that the best way to curb the spread of the disease among inmates is to immunise them; that way, there will be no need to isolate those already carrying the virus.

The officer in charge of Luzira Women's Prison, Stella Nabunya, commended Norvik Hospital for taking their services to the inmates free of charge.

"We have so far lost three of our inmates to hepatitis B: Two passed away last year and another died this year," Nabunya said.

Adeline Mathews, the head of strategic business development at Norvik Hospital, said: "Testing and vaccinating hepatitis B is costly, that is why we came up with the idea of extending services to the people behind bars."

"Unlike other private health entities that provide one dose, we shall give maximum vaccination (three doses) to these inmates to ensure they complete the dosage,"

HEPATITIS B FACTS

- Hepatitis B is a viral infection that attacks the liver and can cause both acute and chronic disease.
- The virus is transmitted through contact with the blood or other body fluids of an infected person.
- Hepatitis B is most commonly spread from mother to child at birth (perinatal transmission), or through exposure to infected blood.
- Hepatitis B is also spread by exposure to body fluids, such as saliva, menstrual blood, vaginal and seminal fluids, and sex.
- Transmission of the virus may also occur during surgery or through the reuse of needles.

she added.

Prevalence

Hepatitis B prevalence in the country stands at 11.6%, with the breakdown of 6.8% within central, western 10%, northern 27.5% and eastern 21.2%.

The hepatitis B virus can cause acute and chronic liver infections and is transmitted through, unprotected sex and infected items, such as needles, razor blades and medical equipment. It can also be spread through unscreened blood transfusions and mother-to-child transmission.