

rently operating on three children and a doctor, with each operation

tem is, Dr Bugembe said there are nearly 1.2 million deaf people in

use quinine as a drug for malaria are

Sore throats risking heart diseases in children – doctors

BY LILIAN NAMAGEMBE

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KAMPALA. More children in Uganda risk heart failure related deaths because parents leave them with untreated sore throats which advance into rheumatic heart diseases as their heart valves get damaged.

The Uganda Heart Institute (UHI) says the number of children under 15 years are becoming more vulnerable and are diagnosed with heart failure resulting from sore throats. UHI now says this number has increased from 376 between 2007 and 2011 to the current 1,000.

Rheumatic heart diseases also advance into adulthood.

Dr John Omangino, the director

of UHI, singled out crowding as the main risk factor, saying the condition stems from a Group A streptococcal bacterial infection which causes rheumatic fever that progresses to rheumatic heart disease.

"It comes from an infection ...that is bacteria of the throat in which the body forms antibodies; which antibodies damage the heart valves and as a result the valves either narrow or fail to close and that's how they end up as heart disease and heart failure, which can lead to loss of life," Dr Omangino said.

He was speaking yesterday during the Uganda rheumatic heart diseases stakeholder meeting in Kampala, also attended by medical doctors from health ministries of

Rwanda and USA. The meeting was called to explore collaborative partnerships with other countries, and sensitising communities, advocating steady supply of antibiotic drugs and monitoring patients; many of whom

"A person who has rheumatic heart disease displays signs of heart failure; can't move long distances, can't do much work, and gets tired very quickly, run short of breath, exhibit body swellings and eventually someone's life is brought to halt," DR JOHN OMANGINO, DIRECTOR OF UHI

are unaware of the ailment.

A rheumatic heart patient would require at least \$10,000 (about Shs36m) to undergo open heart surgery at the UHI once the valves are damaged as compared to less than Shs10,000 required to treat a sore throat with penicillin, an antibiotic.

Dr Omangino said the infection or bacteria is spread through cough among children in crowded classes.

Countrywide, 3.5 per cent of the children have rheumatic heart disease, according to a UHI survey.

The doctors asked government to ensure steady supply of penicillin to treat every child who complains of a sore throat in every village.

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