

KAMPALA. The National Drug Authority (NDA) has flown the suspected fake Hepatitis B vaccines to Geneva, Switzerland at the World Health Organisation (WHO) laboratories for review.

In an interview with *Daily Monitor* yesterday, Ms Donna Asimwe Kusemererwa, the NDA executive secretary, said the overseas analysis will help establish the content of the suspected vaccine used by some private hospitals to immunise Ugandans against Hepatitis B.

"We hope to get results by Monday next week after WHO has done examinations on the vaccine samples," Ms Kusemererwa said.

She said earlier tests done by NDA laboratories based in Kampala had indicated that the vaccine proteins had been badly denatured due to long exposure to sun.

"We did our preliminary investigations and found out that the proteins had been denatured but we hope WHO laboratories will establish the contents in the suspected vaccines," Ms Kusemererwa added.

Fake vaccines

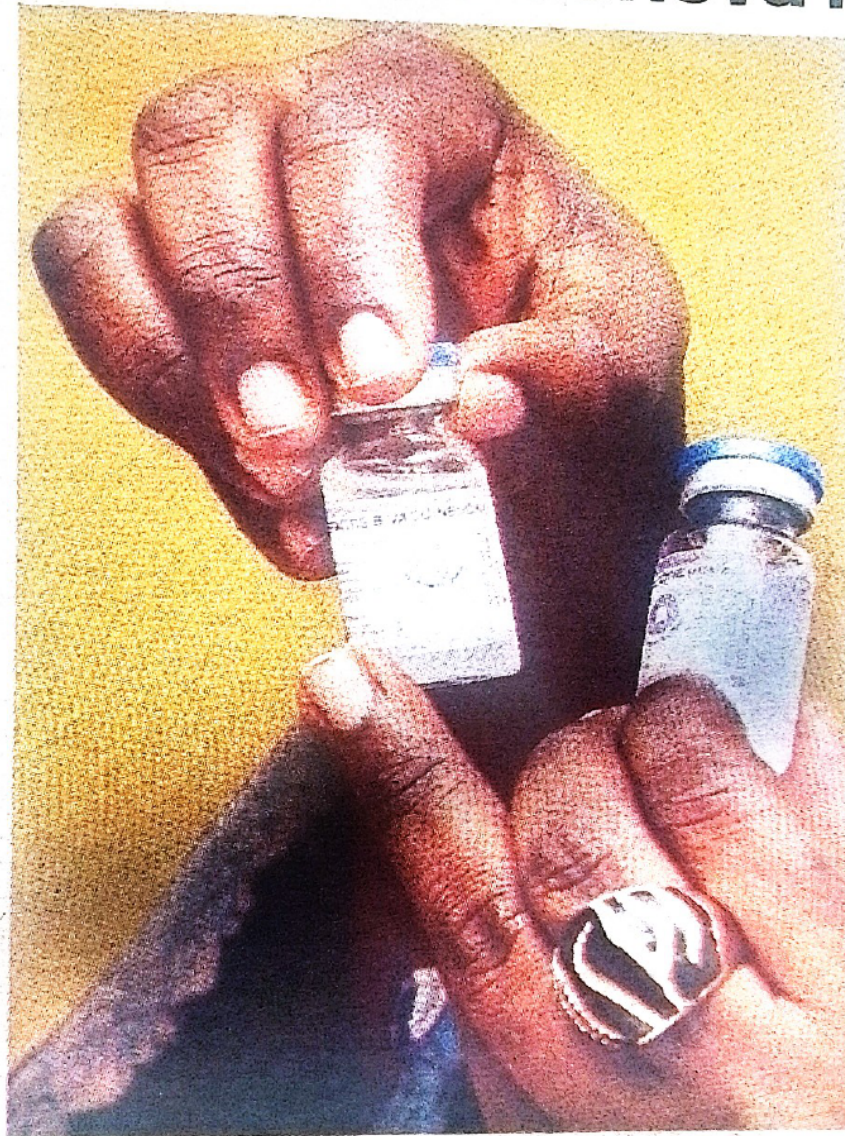
The decision to fly the vaccines to Geneva comes in the wake of reports of perceived fake Hepatitis B vaccines on the market.

Members of the public, including pharmacists, are blaming NDA for failing to stop the importation and sell of counterfeit drugs and vaccines in the country.

On Monday, pharmacists under their umbrella body, the Uganda Pharmacy Owners Association (UPOA), led by Mr Deo Kalikumutima, their legal secretary, told Members of Parliament that the regulating authority lacked capacity to test Hepatitis B vaccines.

According to the NDA chairperson, Mr Medard Bitekyerezo, the falsified Hepatitis B vaccines were

Govt takes 'fake' Hepatitis B vaccines to Geneva for analysis



Explanation. A health worker displays the different samples of Hepatitis B vaccines last week. PHOTO BY ALEX ESAGALA

discovered by the authority's pharmacy vigilance team.

The facilities NDA found administering Hepatitis B vaccines included; Mbarara Community Hospital, Devine Mercy, Mayanja Memorial, Family Doctors Clinic in Ntungamo, Mbarara City Clinic, UMC Hospital in Bukoto, Malcolm Health Centre Kisaasi, and Kampala Chambers on Buganda Road.

Minister's take

Following the exposure, State health minister in charge of general duties Sarah Opendi named eight private hospitals that have been cleared to provide the vaccine.

"The general public is encouraged to receive Hepatitis B vaccination from only the accredited private facilities and government facilities as investigations into the matter take course," Ms Opendi said.

She said the only cleared private hospitals to offer Hepatitis B vaccine include; Nsambya Hospital, Kibuli Hospital, Mengo Hospital, Rubaga Hospital, International Hospital Kampala (IHK), Norvik Hospital, Case Hospital and Nakerero Hospital.

"We shall advise the public on the other facilities that have been cleared for Hepatitis B vaccination in two weeks," she added.

Ms Opendi further indicated that government had recalled all the 10ml vials of Hepatitis B vaccines from the Serum Institute of India from all private facilities and also provided a toll free telephone of 0800-100-066 for the public to report suspected vaccines.