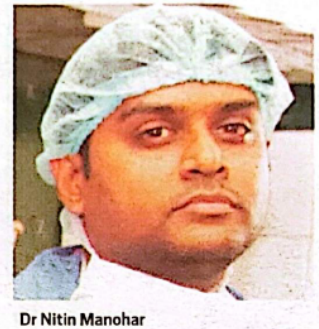
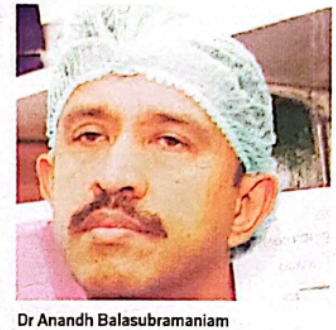
Mulago registers brain surgery milestone

Statistics. Senior neurosurgeon Micheal Edgar Muhumuza says out of every 1,000 people in Uganda, about two to three suffer from brain tumours and require highly specialised neurosurgery.

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Dr Michael Edgar Muhumuza


Dr Nitin Manohar


Dr Anandh Balasubramaniam

KAMPALA. A team of neurosurgeons at Mulago National Referral Hospital with assistance from a visiting team of Indian specialists had by yesterday conducted 11 brain surgeries, including a first attempt at brain surgery while the patient is awake but sedated.

Dr Micheal Edgar Muhumuza, a senior consultant neurosurgeon, told journalists that the surgeries were conducted free of charge during a three-day neurosurgical camp in partnership with Yashoda Hospital based in Hyderabad, India.

He said all the operations were successful and the patients were recovering well.

Dr Muhumuza said the camp is one way of building capabilities for Ugandan neurosurgeons and also acts as a progress assessment for those who have been trained in Yashoda in India. There are only six neurosurgeons in Uganda.

"We are seeing more brain tumour cases due to increased radiology services but the patients are being discovered when it's late," Dr Muhumuza said. He added that out of every 1,000 people in Uganda, about two to three suffer from brain tumours and require highly specialised neurosurgery.

Explaining the complexity of an awake brain surgery, Dr Muhumuza said the procedure enables the neurosurgeons to remove tumors that would otherwise be inoperable like those too close to areas of the brain that control vision, language and body movements.

Dr Anandh Balasubramaniam, the visiting senior consultant and head of neurosurgery at Yashoda hospital, said during the surgical procedure, a patient is not given general anaesthesia which enables conversation with doctors.

He said the patient is kept awake throughout the operation to ensure that the patient's vision, language and body movements are not affected.

Dr Muhumuza indicated that an awake-surgical procedure requires a highly specialised medic to administer anaesthesia, which is a medical procedure that relieves a patient temporally of pain before a surgical operation.

However, Dr Muhumuza said by the end of yesterday, due a change in the patient's condition that was characterized by "confusion and disorientation", they couldn't do an awake brain surgery but rather opted for general anaesthesia.

"As a medical team, we were ready to perform an awake brain surgery but due to the patient's confused and disorientation we had to administer general aneasthesia," he said.

During yesterday operations, the medics-including neurosurgery students, and journalists swarmed around the operating bed as they observed how the brain surgery was being done.

In the theatre, the skull is opened up using a drill to make it possible for doctors to access the patient's brain before the abnormal swelling also referred as a tumour is removed.

> "Due to the ongoing renovation, we have limited intensive care beds to holding brain tumor patients who undergo surgery, so if any patient comes now, the operation will be scheduled for February next year,"
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> DR MICHEAL EDGAR MUHUMUZA, SENIOR CONSULTANT NEUROSURGEON

At the recovery ward, Mr Mubiru Yosia, a resident of Entebbe, whose tumour had grown to the size of a fist and was removed on Monday, said he did not know he had one until about two weeks back when his blood pressure hit abnormal levels.

"My blood pressure caused me to shiver continuously and doctors at Kisubi hospital advised me to undergo a computerised tomography CT scan, which showed a big tumour in the brain that needed surgical intervention," Mr Mubiru said. He expressed gratefullnes to the team of nearly 30 medics who operated on him successfully.

There are no known causes of brain tumours, but Dr Muhumuza said some tumours are linked to family history or exposure to unnecessary radiation.

Another patient found in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), Mr Drakua Freser, whose operation lasted nearly 12 hours, was showing signs of quick recovery as he could speak and move his limbs with ease.

He also indicated that the neurosurgery department is overwhelmed by the number of accident victims who need urgent brain surgery; something he says has undermined surgical chances for patients with brain tumours. At least 10 to 15 accident victims are received by the department daily.

However, Dr Muhumuza said he is upbeat that the renovated Mulago hospital would increase the unit's ICU capacity to accommodate more tumour patients beyond the numbers they currently handle.

He advised boda boda cyclists and passengers to wear helmets as a way of saving the hospital from spending more time on accident victims rather than helping tumour patients.

Dr Muhumuza said brain surgeries are very delicate and require hi-tech equipment which are not available at Mulago, forcing them refer some patients abroad. He said patients with non-cancerous brain tumours have higher chances of survival when operated on early.

THE TEAM

Dr Michael Edgar Muhumuza, senior consultant neurosurgeon and assistant clinical head, Directorate of Surgical Services, Mulago Hospital.
Sr Florence Kamasindi, senior nursing officer in charge of theatres, Mulago Hospital.
Nitin Manohar, chief anaesthesia and neuro-critical care, Yoshoda Hospital, India
Dr Anandh Balasubramaniam, the visiting senior consultant and head of neurosurgery at Yashoda Hospital, India.
Dr Peter Agaba, anaesthiologist.
Dr Solomon Tunde, senior house officer, neurosurgery.
Dr Alfred Ogwal senior house officer, general surgery
Dr Joseph Ntege, senior house officer, neurosurgery.
Dr Ronald Mabubi, senior house officer, neurosurgery
Dr Vincent Madeye, senior house officer, general surgery.
Matron Florence Kamasindi, senior nursing officer and in charge of main operating theatre.
Sr Mary Tusiime, nursing officer, patent recover.
Patricia Nyakecho, biomedical engineer.
Sr Josephine Nabasalizi, scrubing nurse, neurosurgery.
Prossy Lanyero, running nurse.
Jackson Ntegereje, theatre assistant.
Oliver Nangozi, recovery nurse.
Tom Haba, theatre assistant.
Alice Kajumba, theatre assistant.

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