

Pharmacists blame NDA over fake Hepatitis B vaccines

BY MOSES KYEYUNE

mkyeyune@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. Members on Parliament's Committee of Health were shocked about the inefficiencies in the National Drug Authority (NDA).

Pharmacists under their umbrella body, the Uganda Pharmacy Owners Association (UPOA), claim the regulating authority is inefficient and "too incompetent to test Hepatitis B drugs."

"NDA has no capacity to test vaccines, including the fake Hepatitis B vaccine," Mr Deo Kalikumutima, the UPOA legal secretary, said.

This comes in the face of contradictions between government departments, including the Ministry of Health and private health facilities in the wake of perceived fake Hepatitis B vaccines on the market.

For close to three years now, the government has been promoting mass voluntary immunisation against the killer disease, but NDA chairperson Medard Bitekyerezo told Parliament last week that many people had been treated with fake drugs. He blamed the incident on private pharmacies and other privately owned health facilities.

Although the pharmacists agreed that there could be cases of fake drugs, they instead accused the regulator of creating the vacuum by applying double standards.

For instance, they claim numerous clinics and medical facilities stockpile vaccines illegally without NDA licences with full knowledge of the authority.

They further claim the ban on opening of new pharmacies in Kampala has only been applied to stand-alone pharmacies, while hospitals have been allowed to open pharmacies within.

He presented a list of 11 medical centres that allegedly operate illegal pharmacies to the committee.

ILLEGAL PHARMACIES