

Doctors' return excites patients



Care. Dr Joshua Musinguzi attends to a patient at Mulago Hospital yesterday. PHOTO BY STEPHEN WANDERA

Relief. The doctors suspended their industrial action to give government chance to implement its commitments.

BY MONITOR TEAM
editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

COUNTRYWIDE. Services at public hospitals countrywide yesterday returned to normalcy after doctors resumed work.

The doctors on Saturday suspended their three week-long industrial action over poor remuneration and working condition to December 16, to give the government chance to

implement its commitments.

All Out-Patient Departments and clinics at public facilities opened and a significant number of patients, some of who had missed appointments due to the strike, turned up to for treatment and expressed relief.

Doctors clad in white lab coats could be spotted pacing up and down.

Ms Deborah Muwanga, a patient at Kiruddu Hospital, a satellite wing of Mulago National Referral Hospital, said: "I thank God that doctors are back. I did not know what was going to happen to me without having

my blood pressure checked and monitored..."

Dr Ekwaro Obuku, the president of Uganda Medical Association (UMA) that organised the industrial action, yesterday asked health workers on duty to file reports of medicines and supplies shortages to his office.

Dr Charles Kabugo, the head of Clinical services at Kiruddu Hospital, said the strike slowed down service delivery, but patients, some of whom had arbitrarily abandoned the facility, are returning.

"My humble prayer is that the government fulfills its pledge

to doctors because the rate at which patients are pouring [in] here means that they are desperate for services," he said.

The National Medical Stores yesterday and on Sunday delivered truckloads of essential drugs and sundries at Kiruddu.

According to Mulago Hospital spokesman Enoch Kusasira, they have restored full service with all consultants, intern doctors and senior house officers back at work.

The Health ministry is yet to decide whether or not to withdraw substitute doctors offered by police and the army.

Ms Josephine Apinyo at Kiruddu Hospital said the doctors' strike had demotivated them since they "work as a team".

Patients yesterday also trooped in at upcountry facilities including in Mbale, Anaka, Tororo and Pallisa.

Ms Agnes Namono, a patient at Mbale Referral Hospital, said doctors' return to work was a "relief".

"This was a good decision because we were going through a lot pain due to lack of medical attention," she said.

By Emmanuel Ainebyoona,
Fred Wambede, Joseph Omollo
& Julius Ocunai