



Dr G.P. Guar, the director of MedicalCare Kampala Diagnostic Centre (left), Kaducu, Shankar and Akanksha Ahirwar, the resident manager of the centre, during the centre's commissioning at Kira Road, Kampala last Friday. Photo by Ronnie Kijambu

Ugandans urged to go for regular medical checkups

By Michael Odeng and Violet Nabatanzi

Not many Ugandans go to hospital, until they feel ill. But Dr Joyce Moriku Kaducu, the Minister of State for Primary Health Care, says this behaviour ought to stop, arguing that one needs to visit a health facility on a regular basis, for medical checkups, to keep track of their health status as a measure of keeping most diseases under check.

The minister said regular checkups help identify potentially serious ailments early, before they become severe medical problems.

"You can also get good general health advice from the doctor and be aware of some of the potential symptoms and warning signs when you go for regular checkups," she said.

Kaducu gave the advice to guests while commissioning a health facility Medicare-Kampala Diagnostic Centre at Kira Road, Kampala last week.

The minister said medical checkups mainly include preventive screening, tests and physical examinations.

Dr Ekwaro Obuku, the president of the Uganda Medical Association, said a checkup screens for likely diseases to catch them early before they damage the body parts.

"For example, we test and treat HIV to prevent the onset of AIDS," Obuku said.

"When certain cancers are caught early, they can be treated with a cure, for example, breast, prostate and penile cancers."

Obuku said regular

checkups help to prevent common life-threatening diseases and that a health worker can diagnose different health issues in their early stages.

Kaducu also said the number of Ugandans with complicated cases recommended abroad for treatment had remained high, at 700 annually, which was costing the country billions of shillings.

She added that with the establishment of modern hospitals and diagnostic facilities in the country, cases ranging from cancer, liver and heart problems would be reduced, thereby having fewer Ugandans travelling abroad for treatment.

BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ The Uganda Heart Association attributes the rising numbers of heart conditions to lifestyle habits, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, eating junk food and sitting for long hours.

She appealed to the medical workers of the facility to maintain high standards.

Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI) treats 4,500 to 6,000 new cancer cases annually. UCI refers at least 100 patients with different cancers abroad.

Recently, the director of the Uganda Heart Institute, Dr John Omagino, said the Government spends sh234b annually on medical referrals abroad.

Cardiologists under their umbrella body, the Uganda

Heart Association, attribute the rising numbers of heart conditions to lifestyle habits, such as smoking, drinking alcohol, eating junk food and sitting for long hours.

A report by the association said cardiovascular diseases are second to infectious diseases in causing death in Africa, accounting for 11% of the total deaths.

Ravi Shankar, India's High Commissioner to Uganda, said the setting up modern health facilities would leave no reason for Ugandans to go abroad for treatment.

"Ugandans should not only have diagnostic centres, but also specialised hospitals so that they do not travel abroad for organ transplants, brain and heart surgery or cancer treatment," Shankar said.

He advised that technology be improvised to provide treatment and medical advice to people in remote locations.

Jodhani Suresh, the director of Medicare-Kampala Diagnostic Centre, disclosed that establishing the facility had cost \$350,000 (about sh1.4b).

"We have built this structure with high technological machines, such as auto analysers, which carry out different tests, including hepatitis B."

He said in future, they intend to establish more diagnostic centres across the country. He disclosed that the machines carry out tests in 120 seconds.

"Many times, you may not be suffering from the disease. The symptoms you have can develop into a bigger problem, but we can have tests to avert the said conditions," he said.

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