

AU to monitor local medicines

Health talk. The continental body wants similar guidelines for passing drug tests by regulatory bodies.

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ENTEBBE. The African Union (AU) has started consultations to ensure that drugs manufactured or imported to the continent are of quality standards by 2018.

The African Medical Agency (AMA), has been created to regulate all medicines available on the African markets on AU's behalf.

As part of the ongoing consultations, the Uganda Alliance of Patients' Organisations (UAPO) in partnership with the International Alliance of Patients' Organisations (IAPO) hosted a two-day Africa regional meeting of patients' organisations.

The meeting held on Tuesday in Entebbe was organised to discuss how the needs, values and perspectives of patients can be reflected during the implementation process.

Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, the minister of Health, said the move will solve a growing need in the country to address patients' safety in hospitals which cannot be addressed without ensuring safe drugs.

"We need to join hands and cause a major impact in the medical paradigm, from treating the disease to healing the whole patient," Dr Aceng said in a speech read by Ms Sarah



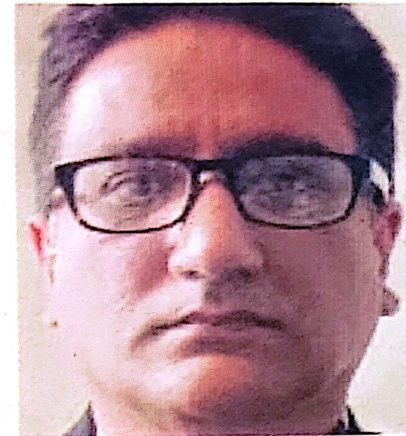
Dr Jane Ruth Aceng

Byakika, the planning commissioner at the ministry.

The development also comes at a time when Uganda is still grappling with the challenge of counterfeit drugs which find their way to the country through the porous borders.

In October last year, the National Drugs Authority (NDA), the drugs regulatory body in the country, recalled six types of drugs and vaccines from the market after investigations indicated that they were not safe for public use.

Some of the recalled drugs include Univittal manufactured by Unichem Laboratories Ltd, hydrapres injection supplied by Laboratorios, SA-Bercelona, Spain and Agonal whose



Mr Kawaldip Sehmi

generic name is Nalidixic Acid from Agog Pharma Ltd, India.

Once established, Mr Kawaldip Sehmi, the chief executive officer of IAPO, said the agency will also help to restore the patients' confidence in locally manufactured drugs.

"So the agency will also ensure that the health professionals giving the drugs understand them. We shall have one education institute for all experts and have the same fact sheet," Mr Sehmi noted.

Mr Joshua Wamboga, a IAPO governing board member, said the initiative will ensure the safety of all innovations in medicines by building local trust and faith through strengthening the regulatory system.

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