

CAUSE TO WORRY

Sleeping sickness resurgence reported

By Lillian N. Magezi

There is a resurgence of sleeping sickness in Uganda and the disease is spreading to areas where it had been previously eliminated, for example, the Lango sub-region, Dr Edridah Tukahebwa, the assistant commissioner for the vector control division in the health ministry, says.

Tukahebwa, who is also the national programme co-ordinator for the Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) programme at the health ministry, says sleeping sickness is endemic in 40 districts (in the Lango sub-region, central and Southwestern regions) and about 10 million people are at risk of getting it.

She explains that sleeping sickness is spread by the bite of an infected tsetse fly. The tsetse fly acquires the infection from human beings or animals.

Tukahebwa notes that the condition mainly affects the rural poor. According to World Health Organisation (WHO), the people most exposed to the tsetse fly and, therefore, the disease, live in rural areas and depend on agriculture, fishing, animal husbandry or hunting.

Information from RTI/ENVISION, an organisation involved in fighting the disease, shows that its symptoms include fever, swollen lymph glands, aching muscles and joints. Others are headaches, itching and irritability. If left untreated, the disease attacks the central nervous system and causes death.

According to WHO, symptoms of the disease after it has attacked the central nervous system, include changes in behaviour, confusion, sensory disturbances and poor co-ordination. There are also disturbances in the sleep cycle. It is from the sleep cycle disruption feature that the disease gets its name.

Treatment and management

The Ministry of Health encourages people who present with the above symptoms to seek medical attention. Patients are usually screened and those who are diagnosed are treated. Patients are urged to seek treatment early for better results.

fighting broke out, some 'pure' Basoga displaced earlier as well as the descendants of Busoga, rushed