

Mulago patient speaks out after open heart surgery

Progress. The patient was transferred from ICU to the recovery ward as the doctors continue to monitor his situation for at least one week. He is expected to be discharged next week.

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KAMPALA. Andrew Kasozi, 45, a resident of Lungujja, a Kampala suburb, was in excruciating chest pain also known as 'angina' and for weeks was unable to breathe normally.

He was too weak to walk without assistance and had regular symptoms of coronary artery disease, including shortness of breath, nausea, sweating and palpitations (irregular heartbeats, or a "flip-flop" feeling in the chest).

Sources close to the 10-hour surgery told *Saturday Monitor* that the patient exhibited exceptional strength in the midst of endless chest pain that had started as a mild discomfort before blocking the flow of the blood to his heart.

He has now become the first Ugandan to undergo the first-ever 'home-based' highly specialised open-heart surgery known as coronary artery bypass grafting surgery.

After going through a successful surgery known as Triple Coronary Artery bypass grafting (CABG), Mr Kasozi, a driver working with the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA), on Thursday emerged from the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Uganda Heart Institute, walking without any support. He had spent three days in ICU following the specialised open heart surgery conducted by doctors at Uganda Heart Institute at Mulago hospital.

Mr Kasozi, looked fine and



Recovering. Andrew Kasozi addresses the press after undergoing heart surgery at Uganda Heart Institute on Monday. PHOTO BY ABUBAKER LUBOWA

even spoke to a flock of waiting journalists. He sounded eloquent and faced the beaming cameras with face of a victor. "I am grateful to the surgeons and doctors who operated on me," he said. "I am now feeling better and with the grace of God, I know I will be healthy again."

The patient was yesterday transferred from ICU to the recovery ward as the doctors continue to monitor his situation for at least one week. The interaction with journalists lasted for about one minute. He is expected to be discharged next week.

Clad in the theatre attire, a team of Ugandan medics who conducted the surgery could not hide their excitement as they watched their patient walk without any assistance and later addressing the journalists with ease.

Dr Emmy Okello, a consultant cardiologist and director of the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory, said Kasozi was admitted at UHI after being referred by another physician.

"He presented with chest pain and hardships in climbing staircases. He also had difficulty in breathing," Dr Okello said.

At 45 years, Dr Okello indicated that a human being should not have difficulty in breathing and that in case it happens one should go for medical checkup before it is too late.

Dr Okello said upon arrival, Mr Kasozi was taken through the diagnosis process which included: physical exam, the electrocardiogram (ECG) and echo/heart ultrasound.

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ANDREW KASOZI, PATIENT

"We realised that the heart function had gone down and also the scan showed blockages in blood vessels of the heart," Dr Okello said, adding that the patient was taken to the catheterization laboratory before the team of doctors recommended the triple coronary artery bypass grafting.

Mr Bernard Kisekka, a brother of the patient, said Kasozi fainted after returning home from work two weeks ago and said he was very sick. "The

next call was asking me to call for an ambulance. We went to International Hospital Kampala but we were asked to come to the Heart Institute," Mr Kisekka explained.

Mr Kisekka, who could also not hide his joy after surgeons saved his brother from the jaws of death, said: "I was worried that I was not going to see [my brother] again."

Mr Kisekka also explained that their mother was anxiously waiting at home to know whether his son was recuperating after surgery. Kasozi is a father of five.

Kisekka thanked KCCA management for paying his brother's medical bills amounting to Shs18m.

Dr Lameck Ssemogerere, an intensivist and the head of critical care services at UHI, said the patient was recovering very well.

"As you have seen, the patient is doing well and he is able to feed, talk and walk on his own," Dr Ssemogerere said.

Dr John Omagino, the UHI executive director, said his facility had registered a great development that needs to be celebrated.

"With this surgery, it's now going to be routinely performed in Uganda and the percentage of people being referred abroad is going to reduce to less than 5 per cent," Dr Omagino said.

He said the institute has attained technical capacity to offer the complete range of cardiac care services comparable to any centre of excellence in the world.

He said the unit cost for comprehensive care that includes diagnostics, interventions in the catheterization laboratory and operating theatre ranges between \$5,000 and \$8,000 (Shs18m and Shs29m).