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neer from Rakai District.

Mengo Hospital cleared over patients deaths

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KAMPALA. Frequent visits by the health workers and visitors to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) could have exposed five patients to infections that caused their death, following a one-week medical camp by Mengo Hospital in Kampala in October last year, investigations have indicated.

The investigations followed media reports that circulated indicating that at least 13 patients operated on during the one-week long neurosurgical camp at the hospital, including former Kyadondo South MP Issa Kikungwe passed on. The reports also indicated that patients died because the doctors were not qualified.

However, the investigations carried out by Uganda Medical and Dental Practioners' Council (UMDPC) on the directive of the health ministry has cleared the hospital of accusations that the medical team was unqualified.

"Council noted that all the health care workers involved in the neurosurgical camp were qualified and were duly registered by their respective regulatory councils. These included neurosurgeons, Intensivists, anesthetists, nurses, biomedical engineers/technologists and allied health workers," Ms Sarah Opendi Minister of State for Health (General Duties) said.

Organisers

The camp organised by the 120-year-old Anglican Church-founded Mengo Hospital in collaboration with the US-based Duke University and the Neurosurgical Society of Uganda (NSU) conducted neurosurgery concerned with the prevention, diagnosis, surgical treatment and rehabilitation of disorders, which affect any portion of the nervous system including the brain, spinal cord, peripheral nerves, and cerebrovascular system.

NEW GUIDELINES

UMDPC has since beginning of year introduced new guidelines among others as a pre-requisite, following complaints from previous camps where several preventable deaths were registered due to the unqualified medical practitioners used.

Among others, the organisers of medical camps offering surgical, dental and other services shall have to plan for management of early and late complications including a plan for patients' referral where necessary in case of any incident.

While releasing the report at the Ministry Head Quarters during a press conference in Kampala yesterday, Ms Opendi also said the visiting team of neurosurgeons had previously held 11 similar neurosurgical camps, 10 at Mulago National Referral Hospital and one at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital.

"The Mengo [Hospital] camp was intended to work on complex neurosurgeries which would otherwise have been referred abroad. Overall, there was adequate preparation for the camp...council established that equipment and supplies were adequately provided in the theatre, ICU and High Dependency Unit for the neurosurgical camp," Ms Opendi added, in reference to the report.

However, the number of 31 patients whom the report mentions as the camp beneficiaries is contrary to the 33 that was mentioned by Dr Rose Mutumba, the Mengo Hospital medical director, in a December exclusive interview with *Daily Monitor*, months after the incident.

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