



# THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF UGANDA (PSU)

## PHARMACISTS CALL FOR RECRUITMENT OF MORE PHARMACISTS IN GOVERNMENT

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Pharmacists in Uganda have called for more support towards Pharmaceutical service delivery as key stakeholders in the country's health sector.

Under their umbrella body; Pharmaceutical Society of Uganda (PSU) the pharmacists said that many health facilities in both the private and public sectors do not sufficient employ pharmacists, instead they opt for lower cadres who do not have the skill and expertise that Pharmacists have. This has a great toll on the quality of Pharmaceutical services that is offered in the country and can potentially result in higher costs of treatment due to drug related complications, drug shortages, drug wastage and irrational use.

"The healthcare system is incomplete without the contribution of pharmacists," said Dr Patrick Ogwang, the president of PSU during the World Pharmacist Day celebrations held on Monday the 25<sup>th</sup> in Kampala.

This year's World Pharmacist Day was held under the theme, 'From research to healthcare, pharmacists at your service'

According to Dr Ogwang, whereas various efforts have been made to have more Pharmacists absorbed in the health sector, the numbers are still low compared to the requirement. Dr Ogwang added that there is a challenge of inadequate equipment for pharmacists to do their work.

"In most cases, we need funds for research and acquisition of equipment required by pharmacists. There is also lack of enough teaching staff to train more pharmacists," he said.

Opio Samuel, the Secretary of the Pharmaceutical society of Uganda, states that Uganda currently employs an average of only one pharmacist per regional referral hospital and hardly any at the district hospitals. In other countries, a Pharmacist is available in every ward to support the health care team of Doctors and nurses especially as regards drug use and monitoring. With increasing complexities in drug regimens, resistance to antibiotics, misuse of injections, drug interactions, harmful effects of drugs, issues on quality of medicines there is need to have a Pharmacist at every ward.

In a country where resources are scarce, Pharmacists can also apply their skills in Pharmacoeconomics and assist government in minimizing drug wastage, curbing drug shortages and ensuring steady medicines supply to Uganda's population. There are also some simple drug formulations that can be compounded by Pharmacists at the hospital level such as disinfectants, creams and ointments, eye drops and help further improve access to medicines.

"Uganda therefore needs an estimated 2,000 Pharmacists in the public hospitals but less



Rebecca Kadaga flags off PSU Sickle Cell Run

than 10% are currently employed," Opio further adds.

Mr. Alex Buyinza, a Pharmacy student and a member of Makerere University Pharmacy students association (MUPSA), said lack of special recognition of Pharmacists has affected the profession since most of pharmacists end up not applying their skills. There is a lot that Pharmacists can do but government needs to recognize them as an integral part of the healthcare team and not just a component for drug supply.

"Not being recognised in the health system has affected the efficiency of the entire health system. Patients end up taking medicines that are not prescribed by professionals," he said.

Mr Buyinza said it is therefore, imperative for government to support the profession when it comes to funding, training and recruitment of more specialists. This, he says, would relieve the profession of some of the most disturbing challenges in recent years since they will be empowered in the health sector.

"Acquiring of more equipment, most especially storage equipment of medicines, is crucial," he said.

Ms Yvonne Nyamigisha, a pharmacist and member of PSU, said one of the biggest challenges the country faces currently, is lack of enough qualified professional pharmacists, adding that the patient-pharmacist ratio is currently low. This, she said, has hindered Ugandans from receiving quality health care from medical personnel. The lack of enough pharmacists in the country, Ms Yvonne said is a major contributing factor to the common misuse of medicines that could be harmful to the health of most Ugandans.

**Event**

The Pharmacy Awareness Week that began on 24th of September with a Sickle cell charity run, culminating with the World Pharmacist day commemoration and display of Pharmacist services on 25th September was organised by PSU drawing in various partners including MUPSA, Norvik Hospital

, 20,000 babies are born each year with sickle cell disease. However, 80% die before their 5th birthday. Those that survive live a low quality of life. Due to the debilitating effects of the disease patients have to be placed on a cocktail of drugs that include antibiotics, antimalarial prophylaxis, folic acid supplements and pain killers to manage various pain episodes. It is estimated that children affected by this disease spend a bigger portion of their time absent from school and in hospital. As Pharmacists, we are deeply concerned since studies show that placement of sickle cell patients on the hydroxyurea drug, which currently is not yet under the essential medicines list can reduce death incidences by almost 42% and curb absenteeism and pain episodes that sicklers experience. We therefore decided to support this initiative by SAUA total



Pharmacists offer Free medical services

Nakasero Blood Bank. We organized the Sickle cell run on the 24th of September as part of raising funds to support the Sickle Cell Association of Uganda (SAU) in setting up a sickle cell treatment centre in Namalere Kawanda, says Opio. More than 75% of sickle cell disease lies in sub-saharan Africa. In Uganda



Members of Makerere Pharmacy Students Association during World Pharmacist day exhibition

of 45 million was raised in pledges and sponsorship from various organizations and we believe that part of the proceed surplus can go towards breaking ground.

During the World Pharmacist day held at the constitutional square Pharmacy students led by their association MUPSA support by PSU, Norvik hospital and Nakasero blood bank conducted a number of activities including: Drug information provision to the public, Cardiovascular assessment, diabetes screening, nutrition education, blood Donation, HIV/Aids testing and counseling, dental checkup and Hepatitis B screening among others.



Hon. Rebecca Kadaga the Chief Runner, PSU Secretary Samuel Opio participate in running to raise funds for construction of Sickle Cell Treatment Center



In the center; Dr. Ogwang Patrick the President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Uganda