



NDA staff conducts routine inspections to ensure that the population has access to quality, safe and efficacious medicines.

FILE PHOTOS

How to start up a pharmacy

Licence. Anyone can own a pharmacy or drug shop even without medical background provided they recruit qualified staff as provided in the licencing guidelines.

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About seven years ago, Mr Benard Ainebyoona, a telecommunication engineer established a drug shop in Sonde, Mukono District.

After realising that there was no pharmacy in the area, he upgraded his drug shop into a pharmacy and equipped it with a blood testing laboratory to increase on health services offered to his customers.

"I had to pay for a local licence to operate a retail pharmacy, a certificate of suitability of premises and a certificate of practice. I'm not a doctor but I employ two qualified staff who run the pharmacy. I just come around to assess the pharmacy performance," Mr Ainebyoona says.

According to National Drug Authority (NDA) 2017 licencing guidelines, new drug shop applicants pay between Shs112,500 to Shs255,000 depending on the location while new retail pharmacy applicants within Kampala central division pay Shs1.66m and for other divisions, NDA charges Shs945,000.

The current system does not define or restrict ownership of pharmaceutical business.

Anyone can own a pharmacy or drug shop even without

medical background provided they recruit qualified staff as provided in the licencing guidelines.

NDA prepares and reviews licencing guidelines annually, which are easy to implement because they involve a great extent of public engagement.

Some of the requirements for opening up a pharmacy include, the distance from existing licenced outlets, minimum acceptable floor area and qualification of the person in-charge.

Pharmacies, whether human or veterinary, are supervised by a registered pharmacist who lives in Uganda.

The pharmacy is also required to have other qualified staff, including pharmacy technicians, nurses or veterinary surgeons (in case of a veterinary pharmacy), to deputise the pharmacist.

Drug shops are required to have professionals with approved medical, pharmaceutical or veterinary qualifications who must be active members of their professional councils.

In order to extend services closer to the people, NDA has seven regional offices. They are located in Kampala for the central, Jinja for South Eastern, Tororo for Eastern, Lira for Northern, Arua for West Nile, Hoima for Western and Mbarara for South Western.

This is mainly for purposes of licencing and post market surveillance. So, depending on your location and the service



In order to operate a pharmacy, one has to recruit qualified personnel.

you seek, you may not need to travel to Kampala.

Renewal of licences

Over the time, NDA has required operators who intend to continue running existing licenced outlets to apply for renewal before the expiry of their current licenses.

This enables the authority to adequately plan its resources and avoid delays in the licencing period. It is important to note that no facility is issued a licence before inspection whether new applicant or for renewal purposes.

The authority encourages

earlier submissions before deficiencies are noted during inspection.

It provides operators enough time to address the deficiencies and have their license processed on time.

This is very important, especially for those dealing in importation and exportation of drugs, as regulators in other countries may require an operating licence or import/export license. The drug inspectorate department understands the enormous effort required when the licencing cycle starts and the best strategies to be employed to have all outlets

licensed within the defined timelines.

Advantages of pharmacies

Dr Mahad Kimbowa of Aqua Pharmacy in Seeta, Mukono District, says unlike hospitals that have less drugs, pharmacies usually have a variety of drugs that can serve more purposes of curing more illnesses. Certain brands of drugs in pharmacies.

Mr Kimbowa says the drugs sold in pharmacies are cheaper compared to those in hospitals.

"Pharmacies always have options. If you find that the prescribed drugs are expensive, there is always an option of those made from other countries and they all serve the same purpose. The differences are the countries of origin and make," Mr Kimbowa says.

He says many hospitals prescribe drugs they have in stock, some of which may not cure illness.

Dr Kimbowa is, however, quick to caution that the effectiveness of a pharmacy is dependent on its location.

"If you stock drugs in a pharmacy and its location is of low income earners or is in a remote place, from a business perspective, you stand to lose out," he says.

Conveniently, Mr Kimbowa says pharmacies in most cases, do not have long queues compared to hospitals where patients spend a lot of time waiting to be attended to.

KEY ISSUE

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