

FOREIGN TRAINED DOCTORS FAILING COMPETENCY EXAMS

BY CAROL NATUKUNDA

The medical council is stuck with foreign-educated medical doctors who have failed competency exams.

Regardless of whether or not they are Ugandan citizens, all medical graduates trained abroad must go through a rigorous assessment process before being granted a licence to practise in Uganda. The process includes verification of transcripts from their respective medical schools, a two-part written and clinical licensing exam; and a peer review test for specialists.

In an interview with *Sunday Vision*, the Uganda Medical and Dental Practitioners Council registrar, Dr Katumba Gubala Ssentongo, revealed that although one is given up to four chances to redo the licensing exam, the failure rate was still high.

"The performance is not good and this is worrying. Very few people have passed this exam straight away. Some pass after two or three attempts. We give one a chance of up to four times to do these exams. However, there are those who have exhausted all their chances and we are stuck with them," Ssentongo said.

"We have not released them (the doctors). We want to hold a special meeting and decide what we can do with them. We might ask them to retrain. There is actually one that we have already told to go back to medical school and train afresh. Because the information we got from him is not that of a doctor," Ssentongo added.

In its annual report last year, the council stated that out of the 24 candidates (trained abroad) who presented themselves for the licensure examinations, only half



Doctors treating a patient. Statistics indicate that doctors trained in outside countries are failing competency tests

of the candidates passed. Details also reveal that since 2012, only graduates that have trained in universities in Ukraine, Cuba, Mauritius, India, Democratic Republic of Congo, Romania and Kazakhstan have recorded stellar performance in the exams.

"The graduates we subject to this test are in two categories: the people who have studied in other countries, as well as Ugandans who got scholarships through the Government to go abroad and train. These categories must sit this exam before proceeding to work in our hospitals," Ssentongo said.

at a hospital so that you can know the conditions and drugs used. We realised that some universities have not been fair to our students. They do not allow them to treat patients in their country. After the attachments, you then start internship," he added.

Ssentongo decried stiff resistance from a section of parents whose children had failed the exam.

"The people who train children abroad are mainly powerful families. They think the exam is targeting them. Yet this is the standard practice the world over."

The council is due to compile a report showing a pattern of universities which are not giving a fair deal to Ugandan students. Officials hope that this will enable parents to make informed choices on where to send their children.

Ssentongo also said there was need to assess the worthiness of foreign scholarships given to medical students through the education ministry.

UGANDAN DOCTORS

Meanwhile, the East African Community is also pushing for a joint examination for all medical practitioners and dental surgeons in the region as a way to check on the quality of doctors. Ssentongo said the joint exam would make each university to take responsibility in quality training.

"Some universities are happy when we test the doctors who are trained abroad. However, if we used the same measure on our local graduates, even public universities would be exposed. We have been having challenges during inspections. For instance, when you ask for surgeons, they stage-manage them. This hide-and-seek will not help us."

FOREIGN-TRAINED DOCTORS

COUNTRY	NUMBER	PASSED	FAILED
CHINA	13	07	06
UKRAINE	01	01	00
RUSSIA	02	00	02
SUDAN	04	02	02
ALGERIA	03	02	01
AMERICA	01	00	01
TOTAL	24	12	12

"We have lives involved. If you are a quack, you can be a danger to the public. If you pass (the exam), we still first give you an attachment