

# Monthly Newsletter



## ALLIED HEALTH DRUG DISPENSARIES ARE THE NEW GOVERNMENT STRATEGY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE (AMR) IN UGANDA

**Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)** is one of the greatest public health threats facing the world today. The misuse, overuse, and irrational handling of medicines, especially antibiotics, have accelerated the emergence of resistant microorganisms, making common infections harder and more expensive to treat. In Uganda, the fight against AMR requires a strong, well-regulated, and professionally guided medicine supply system. Allied Health Drug Dispensaries are increasingly becoming a critical turning point in this fight.

**Drug Dispensaries regulated by the Allied Health Professionals Council (AHPC)** are unique healthcare establishments operated strictly by trained pharmacy professionals. These facilities are managed by registered **Dispensers who must first complete a three-year formal training program in pharmacy** and thereafter accumulate four years of supervised professional experience before qualifying for independent practice.

### IN THIS NEWSLETTER YOU CAN EXPECT:

How Dispensers are trained in Uganda and their expertise in medicine handling

Dangers of Task Shifting in medicine supply chain

Allied health drug Dispensaries as AMR stewardship hubs

Allied health drug dispensaries as sources of reliable data, bridging the existing gaps

Allied health drug dispensaries as training hubs for future AMR stewards



# SEKATULU DRUG DISPENSARY

Quality Pharmaceutical Care For All



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This training pathway is rigorous and comprehensive. **During their academic training, Dispensers undergo structured rotations and placements in hospital pharmacies, community pharmacies, pharmaceutical industries, regulatory institutions, and research centers.** These experiences expose them to rational medicine use, pharmaceutical care, patient counseling, pharmacovigilance, infection prevention, and antimicrobial stewardship principles.

**After registration, Dispensers continue to practice under the supervision of pharmacists in hospitals, industries, regulatory bodies such as the National Drug Authority (NDA), and community settings for four years.** It is only after this practical exposure and mentorship that they qualify to be licensed by AHPC for independent practice. This professional journey creates a highly competent cadre of medicine experts who understand the dangers of irrational drug use and the importance of protecting antimicrobials for future generations.

## PROFESSIONALISM IN MEDICINE HANDLING

Unlike pharmacies, AHPC-guided Drug Dispensaries are clearly reserved for pharmacy professionals. The Council has guided, in accordance with the law, that these facilities are operated by Dispensers, with pharmacy assistants only working under direct professional supervision.

This structure is extremely important in combating AMR because medicines are handled by personnel specifically trained in: Rational dispensing, Patient counseling, dosage interpretation, detection of prescription errors, adherence monitoring, Drug interactions, appropriate antibiotic use and Infection prevention and control.

*Pharmacy professionals understand that antibiotics are not ordinary commodities. They are life-saving medicines that must be used responsibly and only when necessary.*

## THE DANGER OF TASK SHIFTING IN MEDICINE DISPENSING

One of the major contributors to AMR is irrational medicine supply by untrained personnel. In many settings, non-pharmacy professionals are involved in dispensing and selling medicines despite lacking formal pharmaceutical training.

**Dispensing is major task and should be a RESERVE of only Pharmacy professionals.**

This is not mere issuance of medicines. Task shifting in reference to Dispensing creates dangerous gaps in healthcare delivery. Individuals without pharmaceutical training may supply antibiotics without proper indication, recommend incorrect doses, encourage incomplete treatment courses, fail to identify drug interactions, Misguide patients on adherence, Promote self-medication, inappropriately substitute medicines, dispense medicines without adequate patient assessment

Such practices fuel antibiotic misuse and ultimately accelerate resistance.

***AMR does not only threaten individual patients; it threatens entire health systems.***

Resistant infections lead to prolonged illness, treatment failure, increased hospital admissions, higher healthcare costs, disability, and death. If not controlled, Uganda risks entering an era where common infections become untreatable.

*This is why professionally managed Drug Dispensaries are becoming an important safeguard for public health.*

**DRUG DISPENSARIES AS CENTERS OF AMR STEWARDSHIP**

Dispensers are frontline medicine stewards. Their training equips them to promote the rational use of antimicrobials and educate communities on proper medicine use.

Today, many Drug Dispensaries are actively involved in counseling patients on adherence to treatment, discouraging self-medication, referring complicated cases appropriately, monitoring antibiotic use patterns, educating communities on dangers of misuse and detecting and reporting suspected adverse drug reactions

The Pharmacy Professionals' Association of Uganda (PPAU) has further strengthened this effort through its **AMR Committee, which actively participates in AMR stewardship initiatives and sensitization campaigns.**

Members are increasingly vigilant about irrational medicine use and committed to protecting the effectiveness of antimicrobials.

**STRENGTHENING SURVEILLANCE THROUGH REPORTING**

Another major advantage of Allied Health Drug Dispensaries is accountability and reporting.

AHPC requires licensed Drug Dispensaries to submit annual reports as part of their legal obligations. PPAU is already encouraging members to adopt monthly reporting systems that feed into quarterly and annual reports.

These reports may include number of patients attended to common disease conditions managed, categories of medicines dispensed, prescription trends, antibiotic dispensing patterns, referrals made and public health observations

This reporting framework has enormous potential for AMR surveillance. Through consolidated data, Uganda can monitor antibiotic consumption trends, identify overused antimicrobial classes, detect emerging misuse patterns, inform national AMR strategies, improve medicine forecasting and procurement and support evidence-based policymaking

**Reliable pharmaceutical data is essential in combating AMR, and Drug Dispensaries can become one of the strongest sources of such information.**

**DRUG DISPENSARIES AS TRAINING HUBS**

Drug Dispensaries are now increasingly serving as practical training centers for pharmacy students at certificate, diploma, and degree levels.

This development is important because students are trained directly within professionally regulated medicine environments where rational dispensing practices are emphasized. During training, students learn responsible antibiotic dispensing, patient-centered care, proper prescription interpretation and AMR stewardship principles

By the time these learners qualify into professional practice, they are already equipped with the mindset and skills necessary to combat AMR.



## Improving Access While Protecting Public Health

Uganda continues to face gaps in access to essential medicines, especially in underserved communities. Properly licensed Drug Dispensaries bridge this gap by extending professional pharmaceutical services closer to the population while maintaining regulatory oversight.

When communities access medicines through trained pharmacy professionals rather than informal and unregulated outlets, the risk of irrational antibiotic use significantly reduces.

Drug Dispensaries therefore serve both healthcare access and public health protection roles simultaneously.

**As the Pharmacy Professionals' Association of Uganda (PPAU)**, through the Ministry of Health, we sincerely appreciate the Government of Uganda for supporting Dispensers and recognizing their right to private practice under the guidance of the Allied Health Professionals Council.

***This recognition is a strategic public health intervention that strengthens Uganda's fight against Antimicrobial Resistance.***

We call upon all eligible Dispensers who have attained the required four years of supervised experience to seek licensing and establish professionally managed Drug Dispensaries dealing in essential medicines responsibly and ethically.

We further call upon all stakeholders including government agencies, healthcare professionals, and the public to support professionally regulated pharmaceutical practice as a key pillar in combating AMR.