

Date: 6th April, 2020

STATEMENT ON COVID - 19

The Uganda Cancer Society (UCS) wishes to appreciate the pragmatic steps taken by the Government of Uganda under the leadership of His Excellency Gen. Yoweri Museveni to safeguard the lives of Ugandans and all other persons currently in the country from the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. We believe that if the entire country heeds to the directives by the president and guidelines issued by the Government through the national taskforce and Ministry of Health (MOH), we have a good chance of containing and not exacerbate the spread of COVID - 19.

We therefore want to sincerely appreciate the national taskforce and the MOH for leading operations in the fight against COVID-19. We would like, in a similar and special manner, to commend the medical teams in hospitals and isolation centres as well as security services that are on the frontlines of the battle against COVID – 19 in Uganda. Your patriotism and selfless service to the nation cannot be appreciated enough and will forever be remembered in our history – thank you!

However, we would like to note that cancer patients are among the most vulnerable groups as their immunity is already compromised from the condition and treatment they are going through. This means that cancer patients need special attention to support them cope during this period of COVID-19. As such, we appeal to cancer patients and their caregivers to avoid crowds, maintain social distance as directed by the government. Take all measures to avoid handshake and touching your, mouth, nose and eyes and maintain a safe distance from others as directed by government and ministry of health. We equally encourage cancer patients to maintain a healthy diet as they are already a vulnerable group and need, more than others, a boosted/strong immunity during this time of COVID-19.

On a similar manner, UCS would like to thank the staff of the Uganda Cancer Institute (UCI) for the good work done in providing guidance to cancer patients on how to access treatment during this COVID-19 period as well as the continued care of cancer patients. We value your selfless efforts each day for the sake of the cancer patients under your care. May you remain safe and be blessed as you continue performing your duties. We also appreciate all the civil society organization across the country who are providing patient support and or palliative care services for patients with cancer during this COVID-19 period. Your services are critical in ensuring better treatment outcomes and quality of life of cancer patients.

As such, we note with great concern the challenges cancer patients are facing in accessing treatment from UCI including the fact that movement to the treatment facility is hindered given the current COVID-19 crisis and the transport guidelines by government. Therefore, we appeal to government and ministry of health to strongly consider the following;

1. Issuance of vehicle stickers to NGOs that are providing patient hostel and palliative care services to cancer patients. These cancer patient hostels and hospices need to transport patients who have doctor's appointment to the treatment facility to receive their regular checkups and treatment or take medication to sick patients in their homes.

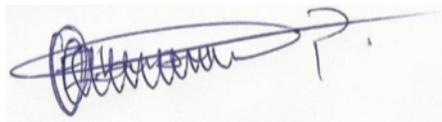
2. Consider cancer patient hostels and hospices as part of the priority list of targeted groups for food distribution as they care for patients who are very vulnerable and need a boosted/strong immunity at this time more than ever.
3. RDCs at the district level should ensure that cancer patients at the districts are supported with transport to come to UCI for treatment.
4. Increase supply for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to cancer treatment centers for cancer patients and their care givers

Less of the above, there will be very negative outcomes among a number of cancer patients in the country which can result to a crisis of its own.

On a more general note, we appeal to all persons who have been put under institutional quarantine and those that have been advised to self-quarantine to strictly adhere to the instructions from the Ministry of Health in order not to compromise the health of other people in the community. Your obedience will save lives of your loved ones, your community and the country at large. That obedience in itself is an act of patriotism and we applaud you for it. We will continue to wish a quick recovery and safety to all the COVID-19 positive cases and all those under quarantine respectively.

UCS therefore would like to wish the rest of Uganda safety during this trying moment and to encourage everyone to heed to the Presidents' directives, the MoH guidelines and the enforcement program of the national taskforce.

We hope and pray for the best.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Ebusu', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Paul Ebusu

Executive Director