



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Response by the Honourable Minister of State for
Health General Duties to a Question by the
Honourable Member of Parliament Nwoya District
on the side effects of the Antiretroviral Drugs being
used in Uganda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nabbanja Robinah'.

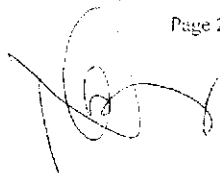
Wednesday, 29th January, 2020

Hon. Nabbanja Robinah,
Minister of State for Health (General Duties)
January 29, 2020

Rt Hon. Speaker: The World Health Organization (WHO), released new HIV treatment guidelines in 2018, following significant concerns about the existing and rising drug resistance to the Antiretroviral drugs in many Sub-Sahara African Countries. Previously, the first line antiretroviral treatment was a combination of three drugs in one fixed dose combination: comprising of **Tenofovir, Lamivudine and Efavirence** commonly known as **TLE**. As such, a new drug- Dolutegravir (DTG), was introduced and recommended to countries as the preferred treatment for eligible patients on First line Anti Retroviral Therapy. In the new drug combination, Dolutegravir replaced Efavirence, to form the fixed dose combination - **Tenofovir, Lamivudine and Dolutegravir** also known as **TLD**. The Country has since 2018, adapted this WHO guidance, and rolled out this drug because of its recognized benefits such as it's being more tolerable, effective in faster viral load suppression and less side effects.

Rt Hon. Speaker: Since its introduction in October 2018, a total of 517,000 patients have been enrolled on the DTG based regimen, with no significant magnitude of adverse events noted. Prior to this roll out process, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the National Drug Authority(NDA) established a robust pharmacovigilance system to support the effective screening, identification, management and referral of any cases identified with adverse events. Like any other drugs, it was anticipated that there would be side effects ranging from mild to moderate and health care providers and patients were given information and trained on what to expect, how to manage and also how to report any side effects.

Rt Hon. Speaker: Following the transition of clients to the new drug regimens, a few side effects have been reported and the Ministry of Health together with NDA is continuing to monitor as well as continuing to educate the health care providers and patients on these. These side



effects as expected range from nausea, vomiting, disturbances in sleep, but are expected to be transient and wear off with time. Any noted severe side effects are being managed and reported by the health care providers at all health facilities that offer Anti retroviral Therapy.

Rt Hon. Speaker: The Ministry of Health in collaboration with National Drug Authority's Pharmacovigilance center continues to monitor the safety of these regimens to collect more evidence to inform policy. In addition, Health care providers are strongly advised to re-enforce the screening of patients before starting treatments to review eligibility as well as conduct continuous monitoring after starting the drugs for signs and symptoms of any side effects. Additionally, the Ministry of Health has engaged the Civil society including the networks of People living with HIV as a way of promoting Patient literacy about the drugs and how to manage any observed side effects.

Rt Hon. Speaker: The Ministry of Health will continue to provide guidance on the immediate and long-term management of patients that develop any side effects related to the drugs but also wishes to reiterate that the drugs are safe, effective and more tolerable and therefore advises all people living with HIV to accept and adhere to their treatment as prescribed. We further encourage all those transitioned to the new drugs to immediately notify the health workers in the event that they develop challenges with the new drugs.

I thank you **Rt Hon. Speaker.**



**Hon. Nabbanja Robinah,
Minister of State for Health (General Duties)
January 29, 2020**

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY