

Government warns drug dispensing outlets against selling antibiotics without prescription

By Polycarp Machira, Dodoma

THE government has warned pharmacies and other drug dispensing outlets to stop selling antibiotics to any patient without a doctor's prescription, because such practice exacerbates antimicrobial resistance and causes loss to the government.

Chief Pharmacist Daudi Msasi said that improper use of antibiotics poses a threat to public health, calling on stakeholders to help spread education on the matter.

"Antimicrobial resistance is costly because when diseases are not responding to the drugs, it will force the government to look for others, which might be expensive," Msasi said, while officiating

at a meeting to discuss the problem ahead of the World Antimicrobial Awareness Week.

The meeting was organized by the Roll Back Antimicrobial resistance Initiative (RBA Initiative), a non-governmental organization whose aim is to fight back antimicrobial resistance.

The organization sees both rural and urban communities as critical players in addressing antimicrobial resistance. Msasi hailed the organization for the good work it is doing in Dodoma and Bahi district, noting that the initiatives ought to be rolled out in the whole region and nation at large.

He said that the government has already approved the regulations governing pharmacies and other

drug dispensing outlets to ensure that they abide by the laws while conducting the business.

The Chief Pharmacist noted further that the regulations are aimed at protecting the public health by making sure that all dispensing outlets adhere to the regulations.

He said the World Antimicrobial Awareness Week aims at increasing awareness to the public on the antimicrobial resistance and encouraging only appropriate use of drugs.

Msasi added that appropriate use of medical drugs includes sticking to only doctors' prescriptions, where to get them, the duration of the patient medication among others.

"However, people should use an-

tibiotics according to their doctors' prescriptions and avoid buying such drugs without being recommended by any medical personnel," he pointed out.

Elaborating, he detailed that antimicrobials resistance differs and depends on the type of a medication preferred, adding that the country for instance, was using Chloroquine to treat malaria, but it developed resistance by 50 per cent and had to be withdrawn and replaced by Sulphadoxine - Pyrimethamine (SP) that was also removed because equally was not treating.

The Chief Pharmacist further noted that when drugs develop resistance by 50 per cent, it is withdrawn from treating such

disease(s), because patients will no longer respond to the medication.

He said that the government has already endorsed the Pharmacy (Prescription Handling and Control) Regulations since June last year.

He added that the respective authorities had started holding accountable pharmacists who go against the laws.

Msasi said that penalties outlined in the regulations include among others fines, being jailed or closing down the business by revoking their licenses.

Thereza Evarist, representative from the Prime Minister's Office, Regional Administration and Local Government, on her part said that antimicrobial resistance is made

worse by misuse and abuse of antibiotics in humans and farm animals.

She said that in spite of limited data in the African region, a recent study shows the emergence of resistance to artemisinin as an antimicrobial used in treating Malaria.

She observed that globally one in ten medicines is estimated to be substandard or falsified and the African region is worse affected than any other parts of the world.

For that matter, she called upon the different stakeholders to work together to secure safe, effective antibiotics for generations to come, including investing in water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and limiting the use of antibiotics in livestock and aqua farming.