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PRESS RELEASE

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TAKE LEAD IN RESTORING PROFESSIONALISM IN THE HEALTH SECTOR

Uganda has witnessed a number of scenarios in which health workers are being implicated in un-ethical and unprofessional behaviour in the course of their duties. Some of the behaviours cited include; diversion of government resources from public hospitals to personal clinics, rudeness toward patients/clients, negligence leading to morbidity and mortality, sexual harassment, among other issues. While a few of these cases may be genuine, many of the health workers may be victims of certain conditions within which they work.

It is such incidents that have prompted students of the College of Health Sciences under their umbrella association, Makerere University Medical Students Association (MUMSA), to form the 'Student Professionalism and Ethics Club' (SPEC) to address issues pertaining to ethics and professionalism in the health profession field.

"The aim of this club is to cultivate a culture of professionalism and ethics among students and improve the quality of health professionals graduating from the College of Health Sciences. Our Vision is to see Makerere University College of Health Sciences being the

fountain of professionalism and ethics in Uganda,” said Mr. Andrew Ndwula, the outgoing President of the medical students association.

Mr. Ndwula further said that students are taking the lead in the task to ensure ethics and professionalism addressed and therefore, it should be expected that there won't be better health providers than them who engage directly through discussions, debates and other activities.

SPEC is on a mission of improving the overall level of ethics and professionalism among students at the Makerere University College of Health Sciences through fostering an environment where ethical and professional behavior issues can be addressed in an open and unbiased forum.

With this work everybody benefits; the students who are training to be tomorrow's health workers (providers); the University whose duty it is to bring out the best in us, and the population (who are the consumers of the health services).

SPEC has the following objectives/ relevance;

- To promote awareness of ethical standards and related issues within the medical profession.
- To provide students with a foundation in ethical reasoning and decision making.
- To develop a code of ethics meant to be observed by medical students.
- To create a forum for professionalism and ethics mentorship.
- To encourage better relationships and cooperation between the different medical disciplines.
- To encourage continued motivation and desire to learn.

We hope to deliver our message through among other strategies; Advocating for positive role modeling.

- Mentorship by senior respectable professionals.
- Volunteering programs.

- Awarding the most professional and ethical students in the College of Health Sciences from every class each year.
- Conducting campaigns on current ethical issues affecting the profession.
- Advocating for better practice and study environment(clean, neat and organized, up to date facilities)
- Developing an ethical code (dress code, patient confidentiality, cell phone use, and respect for each other).
- Holding student-moderated debates and discussion sessions on ethics and how to inculcate them in young medical minds

SPEC is also engaging students in professional learning, by encouraging students to do what is required of them as students; no shortcuts during the course of training and minding ethical issues such as confidentiality when taking part in management of patients (for those in clinical rotations), among other issues.

“It is expected that this will translate into better quality health workers and therefore the community will enjoy better services. Allegations on mortality and morbidity due to medical negligence will drop, there will be reduction in number of litigation cases due to negligence, there will be better health care delivery, community trust in health workers will be restored, while the image of health care providers will also improve”, Mr. Ndawula emphasised.

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