

analysis

By Susan Babijja

In 2006, at the age of 46, Lamberi Kamanya, today the chairman of the Rwanda Kidney Association, was diagnosed with kidney disease. He was in the hospital for almost two years before undergoing a kidney transplant.

Kidneys are two bean shaped organs, each about the size of a fist located just below the rib cage, one on each side of the spine. Every day the two kidneys filter about 120 to 150 quarts of blood to produce about 1 to 2 quarts of urine composed of wastes and extra fluid.

Kamanya suffered from different kinds of ailments for a year before discovering he had kidney failure. He could experience pain all over the body, joint pain, swelling of the face among others.

"I was sick for two years suffering from different diseases and they kept on treating them without improvement until a friend directed me to doctor Joseph Ntaridwa at King Faisal Hospital, who advised me to go for kidney test," he said

He said soon after receiving the results that he had kidney failure, he thought it was a death sentence, which made him sicker until he got doctors counseling.

"I was treated for two years at King Faisal hospital with the help of the ministry of health by that time, until I got someone who agreed to donate me a kidney and we went to India," he said. "I got a transplant and I am living a normal life like others now."

He said patients going to India for kidney transplant must be accompanied by the living donor, who must also be a family member. "After the kidney transplant together with other people in the same category, we decided to set up an association with the aim of finding donors so that we can help in kidney transplant. It is still expensive in Rwanda, it cost Frw 13 million at the time," he explained. "Since we formed the association, we just deal with kidney patients; we would like to also sensitize the community, but we don't have means," he said, calling on people who can donate kidneys to be helping those who are suffering. According to Dr Joseph Ntarindwa, consultant nephrologist at King Faisal Hospital, there is increase in number of

patients requiring dialysis and few people know the advantage of early check-up. "Patients always come for treatment when it's too late, which is dangerous because chances are that such patients might never get better; patients who come earlier can be treated and get better," he said. He added that kidney failure is dangerous because sometimes there are no signs of the disease in early stages. The signs in later stages are normally high blood pressure, fatigue, shortness of breath, loss of appetite, nausea, thirst, swelling of the body, or blood in the urine. Kidney disease is a condition where the kidneys do not work effectively, eventually leading to kidney failure and the need for dialysis or a kidney transplant to survive. "But some insurance policies do not cover kidney dialysis," he said adding that the procedure, which is performed once a month, costs between Frw 900,000 and 1.2 million, depending on which procedure one uses. "The cost of dialysis is too high for most of the patients and there are no kidney transplant services in the country to rely on. The first kidney transplant was done in 2010 from the hospital," he added. **The Kidney** The Kidney removes waste material from the body in the form of urine. Failing to do so, waste and toxic chemicals, metabolites, among others, go on accumulating in the body; producing various toxic manifestations and culminating in death. Acute renal failure develops suddenly and is characterized by sudden diminution of urine flow. It usually develops because of severe dehydration or blood loss from the body when the perfusion of kidneys is reduced suddenly. Congenital abnormalities of the kidneys, infections of the kidneys, even malaria can lead to acute cessation of kidney function. Stones in the urinary tract or kidneys, stricture or obstruction anywhere in the urinary system also cause sudden renal failure, leading to death.

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