



KENYA RENAL ASSOCIATION

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STATEMENT BY THE KENYA RENAL ASSOCIATION REGARDING THE RISK TO THE LIVES OF DIALYSIS PATIENTS CAUSED BY UNPAID BILLS BY NHIF

The Kenya Renal Association is the umbrella body for kidney specialists (nephrologists) in Kenya. With just over 50 specialists in Kenya, the members, though thinly stretched, work with dedication towards providing the best kidney health care using their knowledge, skills and experience. Their expertise is especially needed at the extremes of kidney disease when kidney replacement therapy including dialysis is needed. In line with Universal Health Coverage, the members of Kenya Renal Association are also determined to leave no person behind in accessing affordable healthcare.

It is with this in mind that the Kenya Renal Association is gravely concerned about the ongoing crisis occasioned by the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) in failing or delaying to reimburse dialysis services offered by our members. Over 99% of patients on dialysis are fully covered by NHIF at a rate of Ksh9,500 per dialysis session. This includes the dialysis procedure itself, the blood boosters, and monthly laboratory tests. Each patient accesses 2 sessions of dialysis a week for the rest of their lives or until kidney transplantation is done.

Dialysis units are in a unique financial position in that they offer no other service other than dialysis. Consequently they have no other source of revenue other than reimbursements from NHIF. With daily running costs, any delay or failure by NHIF to release funds that are owed to dialysis units is a death blow to these units and puts a serious threat to offering seamless and continuous care to these patients, all of whom are paying contributors to NHIF. For these patients, missing even a week's sessions of dialysis may cause serious deterioration in their health and even result in avoidable death.

We as Kenya Renal Association are therefore sounding the alarm bells to the Ministry of Health, to the NHIF, and also to our patients, of an impending catastrophe. Already several dialysis units have closed down due to severely restricted cash flow and inability to pay suppliers.

The Rural Hospitals Association of Kenya (RUPHA) has already declared that its member hospitals will ask their patients (who are faithful NHIF contributors) to cover their medical expenses out-of-pocket from January 4th. This includes dialysis patients. It is likely that other hospitals may have to make this tough but necessary decision in order to stay afloat. We therefore anticipate a scenario where the lives of more than 5000 dialysis patients in

Kenya will be in serious jeopardy. In a week's time, they will have to transfer to already crowded and poorly resourced government facilities to access the lifesaving treatment of dialysis.

We estimate that at most, these government-run dialysis units can cover 1500 of these patients. What happens to all the other patients? As Kenya Renal Association, we therefore make the following recommendations:

1. That NHIF urgently releases all the payments for the huge pending bills accrued over the past 1 year.
2. That our patients be prepared for the health crisis they face in less than a week's time by beginning to make the necessary financial and logistical arrangements needed to ensure they continue smoothly with at least twice a week dialysis. Dialysis patients should prepare to make direct payments for dialysis sessions. They should also identify government facilities with dialysis units and book for sessions there in case this crisis is not resolved
3. We make an appeal to the Cabinet Secretary of Health to directly address this issue. Any transition period is a delicate one. The challenges NHIF has created, the small transition time window given, and the job security threat faced by NHIF employees makes this transition from NHIF to the Social Health Authority an even more precarious one. It needs all hands on deck and we ask that the Cabinet Secretary's hands may be more prominent and more proactive.

The Kenya Renal Association remains committed to its core mandates, one of which involves collaborating with government authorities to ensure accessible, available and affordable kidney health services to all Kenyans.

We will continue dedicating ourselves diligently towards ensuring our patients enjoy the best achievable quality of care, even in storms such as this.

Thank you for your continued support and co-operation.



Dr Jonathan Wala

Nephrologist

Chair of the Kenya Renal Association