

Editorial

Why a statutory body to regulate Medical, Nursing and Midwifery Practice in the Southern Sudan is crucial.

A cross sectional survey of private medical practice in Juba Town, Southern Sudan, by a committee composed of representatives of the Directorates of Medical, Nursing and Midwifery including staff of Juba Teaching Hospital in 2008, revealed that 22% of private clinics are run by untrained nurses. The committee also demonstrated that four out of 83 clinics inspected are run by herbalists who perform haemorrhoidectomies at the extortionate cost of 600 - 700 Sudanese pounds per procedure. This is equivalent to 120 to 160 United States dollars. Considering the fact that most people subsist on a dollar a day it is unbelievable that such astronomical sums of money are charged for treatment which may not be necessary in the first place.

The survey also showed that 63% of the 'clinicians' running those clinics have no documentary evidence of medical or other types of registration from a regulatory body either in the Southern Sudan or in their countries of origin. Most of these private practitioners are from Uganda and Kenya and have been shown to have less than five years experience in their respective professions. The Southern Sudanese public must be protected from such assaults by untrained and unregulated practitioners.

We urge the Ministry of Health to immediately set up a Medical and Dental Council to register eligible graduates/practitioners to practice medicine and dentistry in the Southern Sudan according to acceptable international standards. The Council should have statutory powers conferred upon it by the Southern Sudanese Assembly to reprimand, or strike off the Register, errant clinicians who do not respect the public and whose standards of practice fall below what is acceptable internationally. A parallel body to register and regulate nurses, clinical officers and midwives must be set up simultaneously

Members of the medical, nursing and midwifery professions have a responsibility to maintain competence in their fields by engaging in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) – for example by reading this Bulletin and other reliable and up-to-date materials. The public expects all health professionals to be skilled in what they do. That is why many sick people are willing to pay large sums of money to private 'clinicians'. The fine line between charging high fees in private clinics in exchange for clinical services on the one hand and clinical competence and honesty on the other needs clear definition and regular supervision by a statutory body.

Eluzai Abe Hakim
Editor, Southern Sudan Medical Bulletin

1. Directorate of Curative Medical Services, Directorate of Nursing and Midwifery in collaboration with Juba Teaching hospital and State Ministry of Health of Central Equatoria for the Ministry of Health GOSS. *Inspection of private clinics/ health facilities in Juba town – see page 8.*

The **Southern Sudan Medical Bulletin (SSMB)** is a quarterly publication intended for Healthcare Professionals working in the Southern Sudan or those Healthcare Professionals in other parts of the world seeking information on health in the Southern Sudan.

It aims to offer education and information in all specialities and identify research that will inform the development of Health Services in the Southern Sudan. We plan to include reports of original research, critical/systematic reviews, case reports, clinical photographic materials, obituaries, letters to the Editor, use of drugs, medical news of public interest, nutrition matters, public health issues and stories of the health services in the Southern Sudan in the past.

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We encourage readers to print copies and pass them to colleagues.

Editor

Dr Eluzai Abe Hakim
Department of Adult Medicine & Rehabilitation
Newcroft Building
St Mary's Hospital
Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 5TG
UK

Eluzai_hakim@yahoo.co.uk

Deputy Editor

Dr Stanley Mogga Josephson
Jis_staban@inbox.com

Editorial Board

Dr Wani Mena
wanimena@mweb.co.zw
Dr Robert Serafino Lado
Robertserafina@doctors.org.uk
Dr Lado Loro
Lado.loro@gmail.com
Dr Ronald Woro
ronaldworo@hotmail.com
Dr Marcelina Morgan
Muyamarcelina@hotmail.com
Dr James Ayrton
james.ayrton@gmail.com

Editorial Advisor

Ann Burgess
annpatriciaburgess@yahoo.co.uk

Editorial Assistant

Madelaine Linington
madeleine.linington@iow.nhs.uk