

# How important is it to run a post-mortem?

EDITOR: Death remains a mystery to many and causes a lot of discomfort, not only to the family of the deceased but also to anyone that hears of it.

Without a post-mortem report, it is always almost impossible to determine the actual cause of death of any person. However, not many people ever even think of the need to run a post-mortem. This could be mainly because it comes at a cost.

A study previously done revealed that of the people who think of a post-mortem after the death of their loved ones, very few actually go on and have it done. The study reported that many people were reluctant to have a post-mortem done for a number of reasons, including not wanting to delay the burial of the deceased or not seeing the usefulness of knowing the cause of death.

Others were contented with the clinical cause of death often written on the short death certificate. Although all these arguments hold much water, a post-mortem would help the family get closure and alleviate any suspicions surrounding the cause of death.

It is noteworthy that a post-mortem conducted by an appropriate professional, in this case a pathologist, is

the surest way to know with certainty the cause of one's death. It is sad that the importance of a post-mortem report has been relegated to only such purposes as criminal investigations when foul play is suspected or left to a few who can afford the 'luxury'. In cases of unnatural deaths, the Uganda 1935 Inquests Act permits a post-mortem examination. In reality, a post-mortem report is important and how helpful it would be if the cause of every death is determined with the help of a pathologist.

So, what is a post-mortem? In simple terms, a post-mortem (after-death), also known as autopsy, is an examination of a dead body to determine the cause of death. More technically, it is a surgical procedure that consists of a thorough examination of a corpse by dissection to determine the cause, mode and manner of death or to evaluate any disease or injury that may be present for research or educational purposes.

In cases of unnatural and non-accident deaths, or deaths occurring in people with undiagnosed disease before death, post-mortems are the only answer. It often makes for complete and accurate diagnosis of disease.

Towards the end of June 2019, a string of sudden

deaths in Abaita Ababiri village on your way to Entebbe town, all occurring in similar fashion caught the attention of a concerned resident. There were four deaths occurring within short intervals of each other (we later learnt the number was more than had been reported).

For all the four reported fatalities, no specimens were picked for testing, nor were post-mortems done to determine the actual cause of death. While a death certificate was issued at one of the health facilities, we got no such information pertaining to the other deaths. One may ponder; perhaps if such measures as running post-mortem tests were done, even after a single unexplainable death, a clue might point to some cause that could have directed possible intervention.

Such is the case, many a time in practice. Unless possible foul play has been identified as possible link to death no post mortems are ever even considered. How about this be given more attention and consideration; perhaps we might save more lives.

**Doreen N Gonahasa,**  
an epidemiologist with the Uganda Public Health Fellowship Programme, Ministry of Health

PICTURE BY GEORGE BITA

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## A POINT A VIEW

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## Banks should prioritise convenience and safety in Agent Banking

EDITOR: Most big commercial banks have taken up the Agent Banking drive.

Whereas Agent Banking has increased the number of access points to the banking public, there are some key challenges associated with this new system that I have noted as a client of these financial institutions which I truly believe need to be addressed urgently.

I am a shareholder in a retail shop where the policy is that all money made in a day has to be banked the following day. Two weeks ago, we were advised by our bank that unless we are banking sh4m and above, we should never enter the banking hall.

That we should always take the money to the Bank Agents since as a company we have no ATM card and cardless banking is not available at our branch.

So, we have been going to the agents but not without challenges. The first challenge is that the agent near us has no official opening hours.

Sometimes he doesn't open at all and we have to be forced to forfeit banking that day because the other agents are far away and most times they never have what is called "float". The next challenge is security. In the banking hall, security is guaranteed. But most of these Bank Agents don't even have enough room where you can enter and feel secure leave alone the fact that they can't even afford security guards.

This looked at in the wake of robberies and killings of mobile money agents really makes us feel very insecure when banking with agents. The other source of insecurity and inconvenience is moving from agent to agent looking for the one with enough float.

Agent Banking should be by choice but not forced on us the clients.

**Allan Kalangi, Wakiso district**

## How to protect yourself, family against malaria this rainy season

EDITOR: The rainy seasons are often associated with an increase in reported malaria cases.

According to the National Malaria Indicator Survey, malaria affects 95% of the population in Uganda sparing only the highland areas, which are known to have an unfavourable environment for the mosquitoes to survive. However, the year 2018 shocked many with a malaria outbreak detected in Kisoro district, which is the coldest in Uganda.

Ministry of Health implements numerous strategies, including prompt treatment of the sick, intermittent preventive therapy (fansidar) for pregnant women, distribution of insecticide treated bed nets, social mobilisation and behaviour change communication, spraying insecticides to control mosquitoes as well as monitoring, evaluation and surveillance.

Despite aggressive implementation of these interventions, malaria still accounts for 30-50% of patients seen in outpatient departments and 15-20% of hospital

admissions. It also occasionally causes outbreaks in several districts around the country.

At the start of 2019 several districts reported malaria outbreaks. Investigations done found affected areas to have more breeding sites for mosquitoes created by neglected pits following the extraction of murram, stone quarrying activities, and farming activities.

We all need to be vigilant and take note of such factors in our surroundings and put in place the following prevention measures to protect ourselves from malaria:

Use insecticide-treated bed nets. Kill mature mosquitoes in houses by indoor residual spraying. Identify potential mosquito breeding sites near our homes and destroy them.

Wear clothes that cover most of the body, especially when outdoors late at night. Use mosquito repellent. Pregnant women should receive the prophylactic treatment to protect themselves and their newborns from malaria.

**Phoebe Nabunya,**  
Ministry of Health, Kampala

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**Samula Samodo**

There a lot of fake products on market and used mostly by women. Besides, the limited breastfeeding compromises children immunity at a time of high exposure to cancer-causing substances. This leads to cancerous tumours even among them. Most causes of cancer are not addressed because our leaders have signed financially rewarding business contracts at the expense of their people. The situation will worsen as debates are ongoing to extend GMOs. In Uganda, most leaders are business oriented!

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## How did these luxury cars get here?

EDITOR: I react to the story published by *Saturday Vision* "URA impounds luxury vehicles from UK". The question I am asking is, how do these vehicles go past the inspection stage without those concerned noticing that their chassis numbers have been altered? Do I think that in Uganda we have substandard inspection equipments?

These vehicles are valued at between sh100m and 900m. Will these people be compensated for the money spent during the transaction process? My suggestion is, let the Ministry of Transport employ the qualified personnels with standard gadgets. This will help to reduce the racket of chassis numbers alteration by determining the fake and original chassis and engine numbers.

**Brian Akefaho, Kampala**

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