The Pharmaceutical Society Of Uganda

Per medicatum Servium

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PRESS STATEMENT

BUTEBO MEDICATION ERROR – PSU STATEMENT

The Pharmaceutical Society of Uganda (PSU) has learnt with deep concern of a reported medication error at Kabwangasi Health Centre III, Butebo District, where about 25 children are reported to have been administered carbamazepine instead of mebendazole during an outreach, with one child reported to have passed on at Mbale Regional Referral Hospital and over 20 children admitted.

PSU conveys its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and wishes a quick recovery to the children admitted.

Our preliminary information indicates that this is the second similar incident in seven months, after a related incident in March 2026. The recurrence raises serious concerns about systemic gaps in medicines management during outreaches.

Carbamazepine is a Central Nervous System medicine with serious toxicity in children, while mebendazole is an anthelminthic. Confusion between the two points to a breakdown in storage, labelling, and pre-outreach verification. Like many districts, Butebo district has no district pharmacist and relies on Mbale.

PSU reiterates that medicines are not general commodities and must be handled by pharmacy professionals:

1. Every district must have a pharmacist supervising medicines management, with a formal hub-and-spoke model to supervise Health Centre IIIs. The positions for Pharmacists in the approved public service structure should be filled up.
2. Every outreach that carries medicines must have a pharmacist assisted by a pharmacy technician to conduct a mandatory double-check – Right Medicine, Right Label, Right Dose – before medicines leave the store and while in the field.
3. PSU calls for immediate line-listing of all affected children, preservation of drug samples for verification, provision of supportive care in consultation with paediatricians and pharmacists, activation of pharmacovigilance, and a full independent investigation.

The PSU clinical pharmacy team is on standby to support the clinical management of the affected children. We urge calm in the Butebo community as health workers attend to the children.

Yours in service,

THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF UGANDA
29 OCT 2026
P.O. BOX 3774, KAMPALA

Per medicatum servium
(With medicines We serve),

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