DISCRIMINATION and humiliation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other (LGBTQI+) community at public health centres, has forced a majority of them that have contracted sexually transmitted diseases to shun seeking medical care and suffer in silence instead.

In some cases, the overt discrimination and humiliation is understood to have forced some members of the LGBTQI+ to commit suicide.

Although the country’s constitution is explicit when it comes to non-discrimination on the basis of sex, says Dausab, it is a painful reality that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation.

It has become a common practice for some as a consequence due to public health care centres to be homophobic by denying patients from the LGBTQI+ community treatment, the privacy and dignity every other patient is accorded while seeking medical treatment.

There is a growing concern that some of the unethical conduct by nurses during consultation, for instance with a gay patient who has anal herpes, includes the health official calling others into the consultation room before passing grading homophobic comments.

According to the activist, a nurse at a public clinic seeking medical attention, the nurses in consultation rooms call each other in the room and make a spectacle of the patient. In the process, they humiliate this person, which has led so many of them to avoid seeking health care and rather sit at home when they are being ravaged by sickness and disease, Dausab said.

"We have received so many complaints from our members about the humiliation and discrimination they endure at the hands of health personnel when they seek medical attention at state institutions.

For instance, when a gay person has anal herpes and goes to a public clinic seeking medical attention, the nurses in consultation rooms call each other in the room and make a spectacle of the patient. In the process, they humiliate this person, which has led so many of them to avoid seeking health care and rather sit at home when they are being ravaged by sickness and disease," Dausab said.

"It requires a lot of sensitisation of health workers to stop this discrimination of homosexuals when they seek treatment and unfortunately we still have a long way to go in the importance of sensitising us on such matters. If government really wants to bring an end to the discrimination, for convincingly they need to be our policy makers to come up with comprehensive campaigns that do not exclude anyone from the scope."

"As professionals sometimes our backgrounds interfere with our conduct at work, as well that’s why there is so much stigma and discrimination” she said.

The Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Juliet Kavunta said the ministry’s service charter was against discrimination of any one.

"We should more helpful if those discriminated by staff at state health institutions contact her office so that she can personally address the matter."

"If anyone goes through such treatment, they should report the matter to me directly so I can come and assist them," she said.

Sometimes a nurse will take a bible and tell you that you need salvation or will altogether refuse to attend to us," Timbo added.

Wendelius Hamutena
Friedel Dausab
Jholer Timbo

Health centres fingered in gays, lesbian bias

By Patience Nyangove

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