

8/19/2016

Daily Nation, Aug 19th 2016

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Friday August 19, 2016 | **DAILY NATION**

Kisii > Facilities can handle patients with respiratory challenges in theatre and intensive care unit

Hospitals produce own oxygen

Officials say except saving lives, they have been able to save millions previously spent on buying the commodity

BY ANGELA OKETCH
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Referral hospitals are now manufacturing their own oxygen to save lives, a vast majority of them newborns.

The move, the hospitals said, is to shield them from heavy costs of buying the product.

Hospitals in Kisii, Busia, Kakamega and Siaya counties said they had installed oxygen plants.

Medical oxygen is used to aid patients with respiratory challenges, especially in theatre, obstetrics, and intensive care units. It is also used to treat ailments like pneumonia. Usually, the hospitals buy the gas from BOC Kenya Ltd.

"I must admit that we are now set for any emergency," said Dr Enoch Ondari, CEO of Kisii Teaching and Referral Hospital.

He said the plant had greatly improved services at the hospital since it was also used in ambulances.

Before installation of the plant at a cost of Sh22 million, the hospital would spend Sh1.2 million a month to buy oxygen.

"We can now save lives, time and money and even get an average of Sh100,000 per month selling the surplus to private hospitals," said Dr Ondari.

The essential commodity, said Dr Ondari, was need to keep the hospital running.

"Without oxygen, we cannot be able to perform operations and even help newborns with breathing problems," he said.

He called for a stronger focus on medical oxygen requirements in healthcare.

Mr Joseph Nundu, a biomedical engineer in charge of Busia Referral Hospital, said they were yet to experience cases getting out of hand at the hospital thanks to oxygen plant that they installed last year. "It was a worthy cause; it was one of the best decisions that the hospital has ever made," he said.

The hospital has two oxygen plants: one in the theatre and the other in the maternity ward.

"We have realised we have been fools by buying oxygen yet we can

affordably tap the free natural resource from the atmosphere," he said.

Mr Nundu said they bought the plants at Sh1.5 million each and in a week they make at least Sh100,000 by selling oxygen depending on the demand.

"Before installing our own plant, we spent a huge amount of money on buying the gas and even renting the cylinders," said the engineer.

In Siaya, the Hewa Tele oxygen plant, installed at Sh50 million, is expected to help 72,000 critically ill patients a year. The plant will increase the availability and supply of oxygen at the Siaya County Referral Hospital.

The public-private partnership by the GE Foundation, the Centre for Public Health and Development and Assist International seeks to expand oxygen supply

in rural facilities.

"We are excited to tackle the oxygen supply problem and hope to impact many lives through this sustainable model," said Dr David Barash, GE Foundation chief medical officer.

According to the World Health Organisation, an estimated two million newborns die annually for lack of oxygen in hospitals.

The organisation lists oxygen as an essential medicine. By increasing the use of oxygen in hospitals, mortality rates in children under five can be reduced by 35 per cent.

Oxygen is a critical treatment for pneumonia. Other branches of medicine, such as surgery and obstetrics, also rely on oxygen.

Respiratory illnesses, such as pneumonia, are a major health problem in Kenya, but treatment is complicated by the current lack of reliable and affordable access to oxygen treatments at hospitals.

According to WHO, acute respiratory infections cause more than two million deaths a year in children less than five years old mostly in developing countries.

Many of these deaths are associated with hypoxaemia, and oxygen therapy is life saving.

WHO, therefore, focused on making oxygen easily available to patients by promoting and field-testing oxygen concentra-

Bomet >

Former civic leaders want Sh19.5 billion

BY GEOFFREY RONO

Former councillors have not been paid anything even as they think they should be get Sh19.5 billion in a sendoff package, the former civic leaders have said.

The leaders had asked central government to pay them a monthly stipend of Sh50,000 "to cushion their families financially", a Sh1.5 million one-off payment as well as a National Hospital Insurance Fund cover.

Yesterday, a group of former civic leaders from Bomet County said they were "suffering immensely and wallowing in poverty" following the government's failure to pay them their dues upon the expiry of their time in office after the last general election.

Left out

"It is unfair that former presidents and MPs have set up their own pension schemes leaving us out," said Mr Richard Ng'eno, the civic leaders' forum chair. "We were doing the same work and serving the same people."

Speaking in Sotik Town yesterday, they said they had petitioned the Senate over the matter which was adopted. "We are now challenging MPs to ratify the same," said Mr Ng'eno.



COMMENTS

Go to this link to join the debate and to see views from other readers:
www.nation.co.ke

Saving lives

COUNTIES THAT HAVE INSTALLED PLANTS

Kisii: Before installation of the plant at a cost of Sh22 million, the hospital would spend Sh1.2 million a month to buy oxygen. CEO says Kisii County Referral Hospital can now handle emergencies comfortably

Busia: The referral hospital has

two oxygen plants: one in the theatre and another in the maternity ward. Engineer says they are also selling the commodity to private hospitals

Siaya: Hewa Tele plant is expected to save 72,000 critically ill patients a year

Kakamega: The county's referral facility has also installed an oxygen plant