Private sector told to help in providing palliative care

It has also emerged that most cancer patients are diagnosed at late stages of the disease

By Standard Team

The private sector has been urged to support the government in its effort to provide palliative care to thousands of patients in the country.

Kenya Hospice and Palliative Care Association Executive Director Zipporah Ali said while the country records more than 25 new cases of cancer to the already existing thousands, 80 per cent of those patients need palliative care.

"Most of the cancer patients are diagnosed at the late stages of the disease, making it necessary for them to receive palliative care, which helps reduce the pain," said Dr Ali.

She added that palliative care will at some point be necessary for the over one million patients with HIV and Aids being treated in the country.

"There is need to have an integrated health system in this country. According to our assessment we do not have enough Hospices to help patients with chronic illnesses to help manage their pain," she said.

At the same time, First Lady Margaret Kenyatta has urged Kenyans to go for early screening of cancer for the reproductive organs such as breast, cervical and prostate cancer, as this is the only way to prevent and cure the disease.

She said the government will launch a nationwide Human Papilloma Virus Vaccination programme by the year 2015, which will prevent 7 out of 10 cervical cancer cases.

"Cervical, breast and prostate cancers present opportunities for early detection through screening and early diagnosis. These three cancers are preventable through primary prevention, screening, early detection and treatment of pre-cancerous lesions during early stages of the disease," she said.

Speaking at Embakasi Primary school yesterday where she launched the Cancer Awareness Month, she said cancer had become the third most common cause of deaths in Kenya, and the leading cause worldwide, hence great urgency and seriousness should be employed in the fight against the disease.

Meanwhile, a leading medic has noted that prostate cancer and complications from high blood pressure are leading causes of death among elderly people in Kiambu County.

Dr Swahil Omar yesterday revealed that the toll and suffering from the disease in people aged 60 and above is exacerbated by the fact that most of them are diagnosed late or are not even aware of their ailment until they are taken ill.