



# Kenya Medical Association

## NATIONAL EXECUTIVE

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### **KENYA MEDICAL ASSOCIATION STATEMENT ON RISE OF MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES & SUICIDE AMONG HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS.**

The Kenya Medical Association (KMA) is a professional association bringing together registered medical practitioners and dentists in Kenya, with the mission of championing for the welfare of doctors and advocating for quality health care for all.

Today 10<sup>th</sup> October 2022, the world is commemorating the **World Mental Health Day** whose theme is **Make Mental Health and Wellbeing a Global Priority for All.**

The Association has noted a rise in mental health issues among Doctors and the subsequent cases of death of Doctors by suicide over the last few years. Last week we learnt with lots of sadness and shock the death of a young doctor with a promising future, following a lengthy battle with depression.

Doctors and health care workers are twice at risk of mental disorders compared to the public. The exact nature is multifactorial including but not limited to stressful work environment, genetic predisposition, personality traits, underdeveloped health seeking behavior, individualism, and stigma at the workplace. The nature of work and the Doctors work environment is often stressful. Long working hours, poor working conditions, poor pay and delayed remuneration, exposure to traumatic events in the workplace have led to fatigue, burnout, anxiety, feelings of guilt, helplessness among others. In this post-pandemic period, the safety of physicians and other health care providers must not to be ignored. Considering the physician patient ratio in Kenya, a doctor lost due to mental health related issues including suicide is one too many, and as KMA through its **Physician Wellbeing Committee**, we aim to collaborate with other stakeholders in implementing the Kenya Mental Health Action Plan 2021 – 2025 and the WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030. This will lead to an increase in promotive and preventive mental health, and providing integrated access to quality mental health services, especially among medical practitioners.

In addition, it is a collective responsibility for all members of society to reduce stigma on mental health issues and to deter future deaths by suicide. We have noted the manner in which mental health cases, including death by suicide are reported through various mainstream media, blogs and social media platforms. We strongly encourage all to follow media ethical guidelines and the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines when reporting about mental health issues. Kenya Medical Association is available to provide guidance where needed.

KMA therefore recommends the following guidelines to always make Doctors mental health and wellbeing a priority.

**President**  
**Dr. Simon Kigundu**

**Vice-President**  
**Dr. Amos Otara**

**Secretary-General**  
**Dr. Diana Marion**

**Assistant Secretary-General**  
**Dr. Elizabeth Gitau**

**Treasurer-General**  
**Dr. Lyndah Kemunto**

1. We encourage all doctors affected to seek help. ( **On Call Support : 0112749615 | 0110932640 | 0759141413** )
2. We encourage all doctors to take a personal responsibility in prioritizing self-care e.g adequate rest and sleep, physical activity, realistic goals, financial planning.
3. We ask all colleagues to be responsible in educating each other about mental health, demystifying myths and minimizing its stigma.
4. Let us be each other's keeper, look out for our colleagues, link them up with care if need be.
5. Healthcare institutions, both private and public, should prioritize the wellbeing and mental health of doctors and all healthcare workers.
6. Provision of mental health services at work to doctors and healthcare workers i.e., periodic debrief sessions
7. We advocate for training institutions to prioritize the mental health and wellbeing of doctors in training, through formal programs.
8. Good labor practices through enhancing a good working environment while fostering favorable working hours.

Signed



Dr. Diana Marion  
**Secretary General**

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