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OVERCROWDING INCIDENT AT ACCIDENT AND EMERGENCY CENTRE OF THE KORLE BU TEACHING HOSPITAL

The Ghana Medical Association (GMA) has taken note of a video of a situation where patients were receiving care sitting on chairs and on the floor at the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital Accident and Emergency Centre.

We have also taken note of a news release issued by the hospital management that sought to create the impression that the incident could be AI-generated.

Subsequently the CEO of the Hospital was heard during the visit by the Minister of Health on 21st March, 2026, stating categorically that at no time was any patient put on the floor and that the said video could be AI-generated.

However, checks at the Korle Bu Accident and Emergency department and a subsequent eyewitness account by a patient relative on Joy News confirmed that the incident did actually occur.

We would like to state that this incident is not unique to Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital but happens from time to time in many other facilities during some surge situations. Often, health workers are left with no choice but to manage patients on trolleys, chairs and sometimes on the floor due to lack of beds and space.

It is also our belief that recent administrative directives by the Hospital Administration and the Ministry of Health may have contributed to a surge in patient admissions exceeding the operational capacity of the Accident and Emergency Centre, as attested to by the news release by Management of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital.

The video also exposes the danger of issuing directives without a comprehensive assessment of the situation, which does not bode well for finding lasting solutions but rather results in unintended significant risk to the quality of care and patient safety.

While we welcome attempts to address the congestion, the Ghana Medical Association calls for a more comprehensive and holistic systems approach with demonstrable commitment to help deal with the situation.

We therefore propose the following;

1. There is a need to institute a digitized intra-hospital bed management system and a surge plan with strengthening of equipment, beds, logistics, as well as human resource capacity to handle surges.
2. Timely clinical decision-making and onward transfer of patients out of the Accident and Emergency Centre for definitive care in appropriate departments.
3. The Ministry of Health must coordinate collaboration between the Teaching Hospitals, Ghana Health Service, Mission Hospitals and private facilities that assures prompt cooperation among health facilities with respect to medical emergencies.
4. Retooling and capacity building of nearby hospitals like Usher Hospital, Mamprobi Polyclinic, Kaneshie Polyclinic, with equipment, logistics and teleconsultation capabilities to offtake spillovers during surges. Specialists/consultants and other specialized staff from Korle Bu Teaching Hospital can work with doctors there to manage the patients, to ease the pressure on Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital.
5. Institution of a back referral system for patients who are assessed as stable at the Emergency Departments and the wards may be transferred to capable referring facilities or nearby facilities for continuity of care and subsequent discharge and follow-up.

6. Establishment of Digitized Real-time bed tracking of Emergency room beds in Accra.
7. Pre-arrival coordination between referring facilities, National Ambulance Service and the Accident and Emergency Centre of Korle Bu Teaching Hospital.
8. We call for the urgent establishment of a National Dashboard Tracking/Emergency Command Centre to coordinate bed availability, ambulance deployment, Referral outcomes, and emergency room congestion metrics.

The GMA calls for an urgent inter-agency meeting involving the Ghana Health Service, CHAG, Quasi-Government Health Institutions, National Health Insurance Authority, the National Ambulance Service, Private Healthcare providers as well as Professional Associations in the health sector to find workable and lasting solutions.

In the long term, all District and Regional hospitals must be resourced through targeted provision of necessary equipment and logistics, Human resource capacity building, training, specialist outreaches and telemedicine facilities to safely manage more cases locally, to reduce referrals that flood the larger referral facilities.

The GMA stands ready to work with the Ministry and all stakeholders to find real and lasting solutions to the Emergency preparedness challenges that bedevil our health system to ensure timely, appropriate and safe care at all levels in emergencies.



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