What is your plan to support Kenyans with costly chronic illnesses?

Annastancia Mutua, Cateress



Kenyans struggling with costly chronic illnesses like recurrent brain tumors or unknown diseases need urgent support. I propose the government allocates funds for specialised treatment centers in hospitals and establishes research centers to tackle these diseases. With proper funding and research, I'm confident Kenyans can find innovative solutions, just like we did with M-Pesa.

Beatrice Ngugi, Sales Executive



People with chronic illnesses deserve free treatment, just like street families. Our leaders should prioritize free healthcare, ensuring public facilities remain accessible for early diagnosis and treatment. This will help prevent disease spread and support those in need.

Boniface Wanga, Rider



As citizens, we rely on our government for solutions. Providing free medical cover for chronic illnesses would be a lifeline. It would also encourage people to invest in health insurance, knowing they have a safety net. Additionally, supporting research on unique diseases would be a game-changer.

Daniel Tito, Musician



Free medication for chronic illness patients could reduce suicide rates and alleviate suffering. Many patients give up due to unbearable pain and financial burdens. By providing support, we can improve their quality of life and help families cope with the situation.

Compiled by Jenipher Wachie

FEATURE

Family pushed in debt as SHA cover falls short for daughter's illness

The family has sold land, taken bank loans, surrendered title deeds to hospitals, and sought help from donors in a desperate attempt to save their daughter battling recurring brain tumour and stroke, spending over Sh10 million with no end in sight.

By Joackim Bwana
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The family of 24-year-old Rose Akinyi has spent more than Sh10 million trying to treat their daughter, who is battling a recurring brain tumour and stroke — yet there is still no end in sight.

Akinyi's story highlights the crushing financial burden faced by many Kenyans when chronic illness strikes a loved one.

For her parents, the condition has become a financial sinkhole that has consumed everything — including their savings and property.

Akinyi's mother, Pauline Aloo, says the family has sold parcels of land, taken bank loans, surrendered title deeds to hospitals, and sought help from donors in a desperate attempt to save their daughter.

"It has not been easy. We have taken loans from everywhere and sold the plots we had. The sickness has robbed us of everything," says Aloo tearfully.

Akinyi now spends most of her days either in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or at home under 24-hour nursing care. as she battles stroke, pneumonia and sickle cell anaemia—all at once.

She has been admitted to several hospitals, including Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral and Research Hospital (KUTRRH), Aga Khan, Pandya Hospital, Mombasa Hospital, Bomu Hospital, and Coast General Hospital (CGH).

When not in hospital, she remains under round-the-clock home-based nursing as she battles stroke, pneumonia, and sickle cell anaemia — all at once.

"I used to pay Sh28,000 per week for nursing care, excluding transport, which are about Sh3,500 for taxis, plus medication and consultation fees," Aloo explains.

Her mother explains that her daughter has a tracheostomy to help her breathe, a feeding peg as she cannot eat through her mouth, and that her right eye has almost lost vision following the stroke on the right side of her face.

For three years, Akinyi's parents have poured from their financial cup to the last drop to secure her health, but with each passing day the condition worsens.

Like many Kenyans, they are at a crossroads, having depleted their savings, and are pleading for help from well-wishers, donors and health institutions to assist their daughter, currently admitted to Pandya Hospital ICU for the third time.

"I am appealing to well-wishers. I need help," Aloo pleads.

At KUTRRH, the bill for cyberknife radiation therapy came to Sh350,000. The then National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) covered Sh330,000, leaving the family to pay Sh20,000.

"At Kenyatta, NHIF covered most of it. We had paid for NHIF in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025," Aloo says.

However, at Aga Khan, the bill ballooned to a staggering Sh6.2 million, forcing the family to sell parcels of land. They managed to offset Sh3.3 million and placed a title deed as security for the balance.

"The Sh6.2 million was for 17 days in ICU. With the bill continuing to rise, we were forced to have her transferred to the ward, and later the hospital recommended a transfer to CGH. However, given her delicate condition and vulnerability to infections, we opted for home-based care and employed a round-the-clock nurse," says Aloo.



Rose Akinyi in 2023 before she was diagnosed with a brain tumour. [Courtesy]

> *The latest scan shows the tumour is returning. One scan revealed pneumonia, and we are still waiting for more test results... I am appealing to well-wishers. I need help,"*
>
> **Pauline Aloo,** Mother to Rose Akinyi

At Pandya, the family paid Sh750,000 for the first admission, during which she spent 14 days in ICU and a week in the ward.

"The next stay at Pandya cost Sh590,000, and when she went to ICU again, we paid Sh1.5 million. The last admission also cost Sh1,025,000," says Aloo.At CGH, the family incurred Sh102,000, of which NHIF paid Sh60,000.

Aloo adds that when a head scan was done at CGH, the Social Health Authority (SHA) only covered Sh6,000 out of Sh18,000, and did not facilitate any further bills.

From good health to illness

Akinyi was reportedly well until three years ago, when she began suffering from persistent headaches. On November 2023, an imaging scan at German Medical Centre revealed a right CP angle vestibular schwannoma — a tumour affecting the cerebellar peduncles, midbrain, and fourth ventricle.

Dr K. Njeru and Dr Hellen Musau, both neurosurgeons at Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral and Research Hospital, recommended cyberknife radiation due to the high surgical risk.

"The doctors advised cyberknife radiation because it was a high-risk surgery. She completed five sessions, and we returned home to Mombasa. Meanwhile, we decided to consult a neurosurgeon in Mombasa," says Aloo.

From January to April, they continued visiting a Neurosurgeon in Mombasa because of the constant headaches.

In April, she woke up paralysed on the right side of her face and was rushed to Aga Khan Hospital, where an MRI confirmed that the tumour had grown larger.

"The surgery on 6 May 2024 was successful and she was placed in ICU. However, the surgeon informed us the next day that despite the surgery being a success, Akinyi had suffered a stroke on her right side of the face," said Aloo.

The stroke forced a 17-day stay in ICU, pushing the hospital bill to Sh6.2 million. She was later transferred to the ward, but her condition deteriorated — she developed infections, severe coughing, and fever.

"The doctors said they had done all they could and advised us to choose between CGH and home-based care since it was now a long-term condition," recalls Aloo. "We reasoned that staying at CGH would expose her to infections, so we decided to bring her home," she adds.

At home, Akinyi has been under continuous medical supervision since June 2024, with a private nurse attending to her day and night.

On June 16, 2024, she developed complications and was rushed to CGH, where she spent another 17 days in ICU before being discharged for continued home-based care.

Last month, Akinyi developed a chest infection that made breathing difficult and was readmitted to Pandya Hospital, where she remains in ICU.

MRI scans conducted at Pandya Hospital on September 25, 2025 show the tumour has recurred, and another intensive surgery may be required to save her life.

"The latest scan shows the tumour is returning. One scan revealed pneumonia, and we are still waiting for more test results," says Aloo.

Before her illness, Akinyi was a college student pursuing Human Resource Management.