

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
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MEDICAL REFERRAL BOARD GUIDELINES

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

KFH	King Faisal Hospital
MOH	Ministry of Health
MRB	Medical Referral Board
NRH/UTH	The national referral and university teaching hospitals

FOREWORD

The Government of Rwanda as per the cabinet decisions of 25/11/2003 and 16/3/2005 has established a Medical Referral Board (MRB) managed by the King Faisal Hospital and financed by the Government through the Ministry of Health (Rwanda Cabinet Decisions, 25/11/2003) (Rwanda Cabinet Decisions, 16/3/2005). The MRB manages activities related to referrals of patients abroad. The MRB operates in the Division of Medical Specialized services of the King Faisal hospital since March 2013 (King Faisal Hospital, 2015) .

The Ministry of Health ensures that a sustainable financing system for the high-specialized healthcare services, which require abroad referrals, is in place. MRB Guidelines are developed to provide guidance to have in Rwanda an efficient and sustainable abroad referral system. The Medical Referral Board Guidelines serve as reference for the coordination, management, supervision and monitoring of Abroad Medical Referrals.

The MRB Guidelines have been developed through consultations with several stakeholders, and the Ministry of Health extends its gratitude to all of those who provided comments and inputs for the development of the Medical Referral Guidelines.

The Ministry of Health is pleased to release the Medical Referral Guidelines and urges all concerned institutions to embrace these guidelines and support its full implementation.


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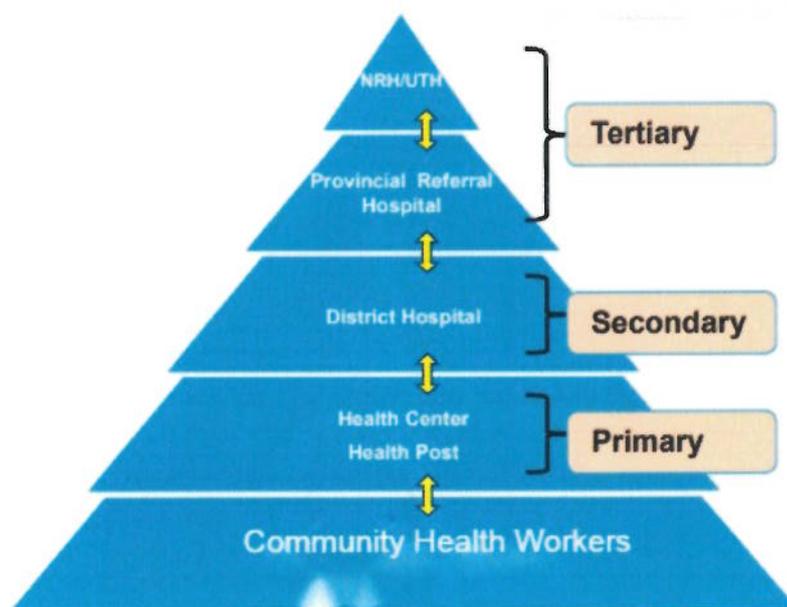
INTRODUCTION

Medical Referral is a process by which a health professional transfers the responsibility of care temporarily or permanently to another health professional or to the community in response to its inability or limitation to provide the necessary care (World Health Organization, 2019).

A referral system entails the interrelationships and coordination of patient care services from one health care facility to another. The referral process begins by the referring health professional communicating to the receiving health professional or specialist relevant patient information. The receiving health professional communicates back to the referring health professional with information and plan for continuum of care thereby completing the referral process.

The Healthcare System in Rwanda reaches from the community to the national referral Hospitals. The National Referral and University Teaching Hospitals (NRH/UTH) are the highest level of care provided within Rwanda. The four referral hospitals are University Teaching Hospital of Butare, University Teaching Hospital of Kigali, King Faisal Hospital and Rwanda Military Hospital. Some specialty services have been developed by the MoH to provide services in specific hospitals, e.g. Neuro-psychiatric services are provided at Ndera Hospital and Butaro Hospital has been identified as the “Butaro Cancer Center of Excellence”. Referral hospitals provide more complex services for diagnosing and treating various conditions and support the use of some specialist doctors (Ministry of Health, 2017) .

Figure 1: Levels of Services provided within the Public Healthcare System



The Government of Rwanda is committed to equip NRH/UTH with modern specialized medical equipment to care for high risk and critically ill patients and reduce the number of referrals abroad. Specifically The King Faisal hospital was created to provide a higher level of technical expertise than that available in the national referral hospitals to both the private and public sector; its role is also to ensure that there is a reduction in the number of referrals abroad (Ministry of Health, Health Sector Policy, 2015).

Currently, in most cases, the National Referral and University Teaching Hospitals are last referral point for patients; in some cases, for high-specialized healthcare services, which are not currently available in Rwanda, patients are referred abroad through MRB.

These guidelines establish the framework in which the support from Government contributions to mitigate the high costs for abroad treatment. Treating those cases usually referred abroad requires as well appropriate financing mechanisms, which involves partnership with the suppliers of the state-of-the-art medical technologies, leasing, and placement as well as insurances schemes.

In Rwanda, the financing of the high-specialized healthcare is at initial stage or not yet developed as well. The guidelines provide guidance on identifying the cases that need abroad referral and this should boost the planning and development of appropriate high-specialized health care service in Rwanda National Referral hospitals with an aim to reduce the Government budget for that and contribute to the medical tourism.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE MRB GUIDELINES

The purpose of these guidelines is to streamline the framework for the abroad referral system aiming at highly specialized abroad diagnosis and treatment programme for the Rwandans, matters connected therewith, and incidental thereto.

FUNCTIONALITY OF MRB

The management of abroad referrals shall be undertaken by the MRB established within the King Faisal Hospital.

The MRB functions are:

- a. Develop Standard Operating Procedures and criteria including the nature and type of conditions for which diagnosis and treatment overseas may be considered.
- b. Evaluate all referrals and determine the requests for abroad diagnosis and treatment.
- c. Review progress and recommend the continuing treatment in Rwanda.
- d. Make recommendations to the Ministry of Health for the introduction of new highly specialized services in the health care system of Rwanda.

FUNCTIONALITY OF MRB SECRETARIAT

The responsibilities and functions of MRB secretariat are to:

- a. Plan, organize and provide logistical support to persons approved by the MRB for abroad diagnosis and treatment.
- b. Liaise with hospitals abroad for appointments or admission dates.
- c. Respond to queries from members of the public about the abroad diagnosis and treatment.
- d. Explain the policies and procedures of the programme to persons and/or their relatives.
- e. Process requests for abroad Referrals and provide formal responses to all matters relating to approval
- f. Support in making the necessary accommodation and travel arrangements.
- g. Obtain updates on persons and their progress.
- h. Keep patients records of follow up visits and statistics.

DECISIONS OF THE MRB

A decision of the MRB shall be on a case by case basis taking into consideration the expert opinion of the specialty or discipline to which the person belongs. The referral decisions of the MRB must be unbiased, impartial and independent of other non-medical considerations and ability to pay for needed medical specialized care. The MRB shall provide the reasons for its decisions in writing.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA

The Government of Rwanda has the following responsibilities:

- a. Appoint “Medical Referral Board”, a multidisciplinary committee, composed by the highly skilled medical specialists. The term of the board shall be for three years’ period renewable once.
- b. Cover the cost of eligible patients for abroad referrals. This privilege is reserved for Rwandan people only.
- c. Cover all expenses for accompanying medical personnel if needed basing on Rwandan Government rate;
- d. Transfer the abroad referral budget to MRB

RESPONSIBILITIES OF KING FAISAL HOSPITAL

King Faisal Hospital has the following responsibilities:

- a. Prepare and request to the MOH abroad referral budget twice a year based on international prices with a priority on value for money.
- b. Conduct due diligence to select international health care providers (hospitals) where patients shall be referred and communicate officially to the MOH.
- c. Receive and process invoice from Providers of high-specialized healthcare services abroad for the services rendered to the patients.

- d. Provide MOH a quarterly report on the use of MRB funds with supporting documents

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PATIENTS

Patients have the following responsibilities:

- a. To cater the cost of abroad treatment if they are self-referred
- b. To prove the capacity to pay for anti-rejection therapy once back in Rwanda if they are undergoing organ transplantation. The exception is made to patients who fell under the category I and II of Ubudehe stratification.

HIGH-SPECIALIZED SERVICES COVERED

MRB shall cover health services that are not offered in the country. When the treating doctor and the MRB have agreed to refer the patient abroad for services available in Rwanda for various reasons, MRB shall meticulously decide on the merits of the case based on prognosis of the patient.

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