

FEATURES

Varsity mortuary user friendly

By Nyauma Ombati

Unlike other funeral homes, Chiromo has demystified the phobia of death by providing user-friendly funeral services.

This was said by Dr Julius Ogeng'o, a member of the management committee and staff of the College of Health Sciences, Human Anatomy Department. The mortuary provides quality services at an affordable rate to members of the public in a clean environment.

Chiromo Mortuary, which has a storage capacity of 150 bodies, started operating in April 1991 as a community service. The cold room can hold 25 bodies at any one time. In a day, 36 bodies can be preserved satisfactorily.

The idea was conceived as a result of the dwindling financial allocations to the Department of Human Anatomy from the Exchequer. The aim of the project was to generate income to subsidize the limited resources in order to purchase the much needed teaching materials at the department.

Chiromo Funeral Services charges are packaged at reasonable rates. If a body is preserved for 14 days, the flat rate is KSh 5,000. If a body lies in the morgue for more than 14 days, an extra charge of KSh 1,500 is levied for every additional week.

Reconstruction is done to accident victims whose bodies are mutilated at rates not exceeding KSh15,000.

The number of attendants at the morgue vary depending on the workload. At least ten workers, drawn from the Human Anatomy Department are on duty every time.

At Chiromo, the quality of services offered is quite high. The workers handle customers courteously. Students are employed on a work-study programme. Students from the College of Health Sciences are given priority. Only needy cases are considered using a laid down scoring system where the background information of the student is collected.

The students are, however, required to satisfy the management on how they plan to reconcile the work and their studies. Students from other departments are allowed to work in the morgue and the same criteria is used to recruit them.

The mortuary project is administered by a management committee which consists of four members drawn from the academic staff, always on stand by to solve crises as they arise.

Prof James Kimani, the manager, is the overall head of the department. The chief technologist is answerable to the management committee. He supervises all the section heads. Section heads are senior technicians who oversee all activities at the mortuary. Below them are laboratory technicians who perform the actual work. The chief technician sits in the management committee as an ex-officio.

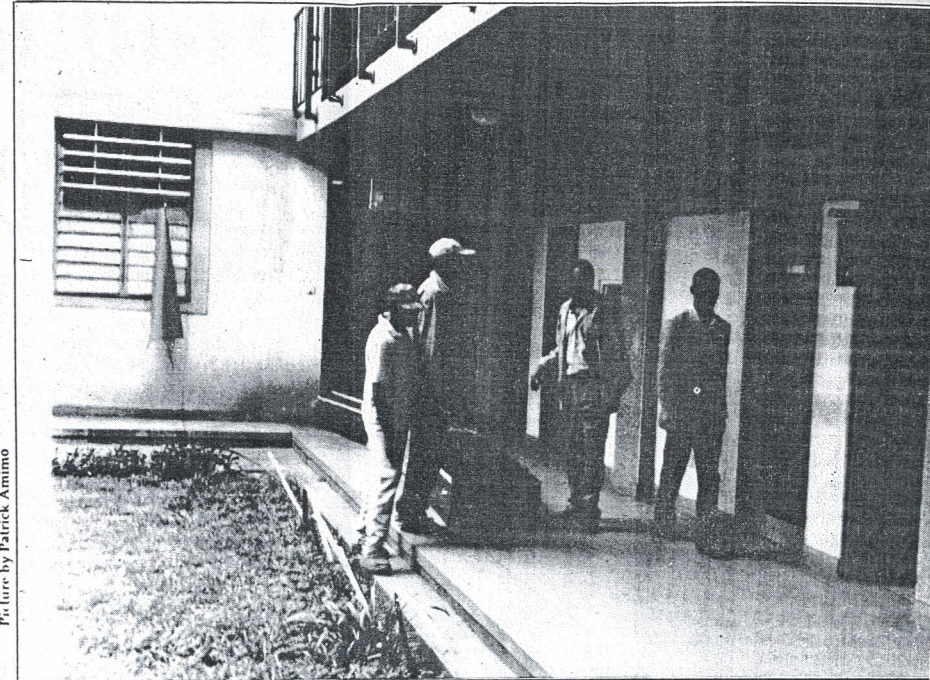
Generated income is ploughed back to improve the facilities at the morgue. These include: improvement of ventilation, making of shelves, water tanks, repair of mechanical equipment, and the construction of the parking and collection lot now in place at the facility.

The university as a whole benefits from revenue so generated at the mortuary. For instance, Chiromo settles the water and electricity bills, it pays for the entire university. Vehicles at Chiromo are always working and assist when there are no vehicles from the transport section. Funeral services for members of staff, both academic and non-academic are held at Chiromo, thus making it a living reality.

Chiromo has great plans for the future. The short term plans are to make the facility more user-friendly. This has started with the construction of a new parking and collection lot located away from the mortuary.

Also, there are plans to move some offices to these premises away from the morgue which is located very close to lecture rooms and the library.

In future, Chiromo is going to be turned into a teaching hospital and its



Picture by Patrick Amimo

Clients collect a body from Chiromo Mortuary. The facility has gained popularity.

name changed. Students from the department have been using a parastatal. If this is successful, branches can be opened at Kenyatta National Hospital, which has since been transformed into