

Rwanda is making huge strides in healthcare, with significant progress in kidney and heart surgeries. Since 2023, 44 kidney transplants have been successfully performed within the country, a major milestone for the health sector.

These surgeries, which were once only available abroad, are now being carried out at King Faisal Hospital in Kigali.

Before this, Rwandans in need of kidney transplants had to travel abroad, often at great expense. Now, patients can receive life-saving care at home, with the added benefit of reduced costs. Kidney transplant procedures abroad could cost between \$7,400 and \$14,000, but now the services are available locally, making it more accessible for those in need.

In addition to kidney transplants, heart surgeries have also made great progress. Since 2022, a total of 541 heart surgeries have been performed in Rwanda, helping both children and adults. These surgeries were once a significant financial burden for Rwandans, requiring travel to other countries. But now, these procedures are being offered locally, improving access to critical care.

Dr. Yvan Butera, the State Minister for Health revealed this to the Parliamentary Committee on Governance, Gender, and Family Affairs on March 6, 2025.

“We are proud to say that Rwandans no longer have to travel abroad for kidney transplants,” he said. “Since we launched the program in May 2023, 44 patients have successfully undergone the procedure, and all of them are doing well.”

“Heart surgeries were once only available abroad, but now we’re bringing these life-saving procedures to our people here in Rwanda,” Dr. Butera said. “This has significantly reduced the cost of care and has improved outcomes for our patients.”

Dr. Butera also highlighted the decrease in the cost of many medical services. For example, the cost of CT scans and MRIs have dropped by 64%, making it more affordable for Rwandans to access these essential diagnostic tools.

This is part of a broader effort to reduce the financial burden on patients and improve access to quality care.

“We’re making healthcare more affordable for everyone. The prices for diagnostic tests like CT scans have decreased significantly, and this is just one example of how we are working to improve access to care,” he added.

Another major step in improving healthcare is the ongoing expansion of primary healthcare services. The Ministry of Health is working to strengthen primary healthcare by increasing the number of trained medical personnel and upgrading health facilities. For instance, the Masaka Health Zone is undergoing significant infrastructure improvements to keep up with the growing demand for healthcare.

“The goal is to ensure that all Rwandans, no matter where they live, have access to the care they need,” Dr. Butera emphasized. “We’re investing in both the facilities and the people who will provide care.”

The Ministry is also working to improve efficiency at health centers. One key initiative is reducing the amount of paperwork patients need to carry when seeking medical care. The goal is to make visits smoother and reduce unnecessary delays, allowing patients to receive quicker, more efficient treatment.

“We are making the patient experience easier by reducing paperwork and improving processes in our healthcare facilities,” Dr. Butera said.

In addition to these advancements, the government has added 14 new services to the Mutuelle de Santé health insurance program. This expansion ensures that more people have access to a wider range of healthcare services without financial strain.

“The ability to treat conditions that once required patients to go overseas is a game-changer. It means we can offer timely and affordable care right here in Rwanda,” he explained.

Rwanda is also seeing a surge in the number of medical students. In 2023, there were 1,604 students training to become healthcare professionals.

By 2024, that number had nearly quadrupled to almost 6,000. This growing number of medical students is expected to help meet the country’s goal of having four healthcare providers for every 1,000 patients within the next four years.

“These future doctors will play a vital role in ensuring that our healthcare system continues to grow and improve,” Dr. Butera said. “We are preparing for a future where healthcare is accessible and affordable for all Rwandans.”

These efforts are part of Rwanda’s long-term vision to improve healthcare access and quality for all citizens. With the continued expansion of services, more people can receive the care they need, right here at home.