

Case: 201004201, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment; diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Miss C's mother, Mrs A, was admitted to the hospital for bladder surgery. Shortly after discharge she experienced abdominal pain. She was re-admitted to the hospital the following day. It was suspected that she had experienced complications from the bladder procedure and investigations were carried out to establish whether this was the case. She was taken for exploratory surgery to establish the cause of her symptoms and given treatment including enemas. Mrs A was diagnosed with Acute Ischaemic Bowel disease (restricted blood supply to the bowel, causing tissue death). She had surgery to remove part of her colon.

Following surgery, Mrs A developed a chest infection and further complications and died nine days after the procedure. Mrs C complained about a lack of treatment for Mrs A during her first day in hospital and a subsequent delay to her diagnosis of Acute Ischemic Bowel disease. She also questioned the use of enemas and complained about staff's communication with the family.

We found that Mrs A's symptoms were, in fact, consistent with a diagnosis of Colonic Infarction. This is a more serious condition which causes a rapid collapse and loss of fluids. We were satisfied that there was no link to Mrs A's previous bladder surgery and that initial tests carried out by the board showed no indication of the condition. We, therefore, did not consider that further tests were required during her first day in hospital, or that there was any cause to carry out surgery any earlier. We did not support the use of enemas in Mrs A's case but concluded that these would not have been harmful to her. With regard to the communication with family members, we were unable to comment on the attitude or manner of individual staff members, but found evidence that appropriate information about Mrs A's condition and treatment was shared with the family as it became known to staff.