

Case: 201102047, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment; diagnosis

Outcome: some upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the side effects that he had suffered since being prescribed gentamicin (a powerful antibiotic) while he was a hospital in-patient. He had been admitted to hospital for treatment for an infection related to his heart pacemaker (a device that regulates heartbeat).

He has since been diagnosed with gentamicin toxicity (poisoning), which has affected his balance and ability to lead a normal life. Early in his treatment, Mr C told nursing and medical staff that he felt dizzy and unbalanced, but was told it was due to the antibiotics and not to worry. Mr C understood that guidelines about the use of gentamicin said the drug should not be given for more than ten days, whereas he had taken it for 14 days. He was concerned that his medical records had not recorded all the times that he had reported dizziness. Mr C also felt that the board's complaints handling was inadequate.

We upheld Mr C's complaint that the board's actions in respect of gentamicin toxicity were unreasonable. Although the medication was appropriately monitored, we found that more notice should have been taken of the side-effects that Mr C reported. The board had upheld Mr C's complaint to them and had taken action to use the lessons learned from his case. They had provided a new prescribing guideline and reminded staff about the issues, so we did not make any recommendations. We found that their complaints handling was adequate.