

SPSO decision report

Case: 201402305, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the care and treatment her husband (Mr C) had received from the board in relation to brain tumours. We took independent advice on this part of her complaint from one of our medical advisers, who is a consultant neurosurgeon. We found that it had been reasonable not to give Mr C radiotherapy after a tumour had been removed at the Western Infirmary. However, Mr C had also been receiving other treatment that would have increased the risk of early or more rapid progression of a recurrent tumour. We found that it had been unreasonable for the board to wait eleven months before carrying out a follow-up scan. In view of this, we upheld this part of Mrs C's complaint. When the follow-up scan was then carried out, it showed a large recurrent tumour.

Mrs C also complained about the nursing care provided to Mr C whilst he was in the Southern General and Beatson Hospital. We took independent advice on this from a nursing adviser and we found that the care provided had been reasonable so we did not uphold this aspect of her complaint. Mrs C also said that the board had failed to adequately explain Mr C's condition and prognosis. Whilst the evidence in relation to this was not conclusive, the comments made by the consultant about the information given to the family were somewhat vague, and Mr and Mrs C had not fully understood what the consultant was trying to say. We found that, on balance, the information had not been satisfactorily communicated to Mr and Mrs C and so we upheld this aspect of the complaint. Finally, Mrs C complained about the board's handling of her complaint. We found that the board's response had been difficult to understand. It contained too much medical terminology and jargon that was not adequately explained. We upheld this part of her complaint for this reason.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- issue a written apology to Mrs C for the failings we identified;
- make the relevant staff involved in Mr C's care and treatment aware of our findings; and
- remind the staff involved in the handling of Mrs C's complaint that responses to complaints should be clear and easy to understand.