

SPSO decision report

Case: 201406447, A Medical Practice in the Tayside NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that she had contacted the practice in the late afternoon to request that a GP attend and assess her partner (Mr A)'s mental health condition as she was seriously concerned that he was having a psychotic episode. Mr A was at another address and she was concerned about his safety. The GP listened to Mrs C's concerns and sought advice from the mental health services. It was decided that it would not be appropriate for them to visit Mr A that evening and that a visit would be made the following morning. Mrs C subsequently reported Mr A missing to police and he was found dead near to the address that Mrs C had highlighted. The GP explained that he had taken Mrs C's concerns seriously, and that he had sought specialist advice and reviewed Mr A's previous medical history and, as there was no immediate risk to Mr A or others, a visit the following morning was appropriate.

We took independent advice from a GP adviser who felt that the GP had not put himself in a position to obtain a first hand assessment of Mr A's mental health condition. The adviser felt that Mrs C's information was concerning enough to warrant action that evening. However, after careful consideration we felt that the GP had acted appropriately by seeking advice from the mental health services about Mr A's previous contact with them, and that there was no indication that Mr A was at risk to himself or others at the time. We found that the GP had treated Mrs C's concerns seriously and that a mental health assessment was appropriate, but that it could wait until the following morning. We did not uphold the complaint.