

SPSO decision report

Case: 201508036, Forth Valley NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who works for an advice agency, complained on behalf of Mr A who was concerned about the care and treatment given to his late wife (Mrs A). In particular, he was concerned that there was an avoidable delay by staff at Forth Valley Royal Hospital in establishing that Mrs A was suffering from breast cancer. While the board accepted that there had been a delay and apologised, they said that Mrs A had suffered from a rare form of cancer which had been difficult to diagnose.

We took independent advice from a consultant breast surgeon. We found that while Mrs A's form of cancer was a very rare variant, opportunities had been missed to diagnose her sooner. There had also been an initial delay in Mrs A being seen and her cytology (examination of tissue samples under a microscope) results had been incorrectly reported. We therefore upheld the complaint and made recommendations.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- make a formal apology recognising the shortcomings we identified; and
- check that the changes they outlined to Mr A are now in place and that all excision biopsies, as well as cytology aspirates and needle biopsies, are formally discussed at multi-disciplinary team meetings.