

SPSO decision report

Case: 201508297, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C attended the chest clinic at Ninewells Hospital with shortness of breath. He said that he was told by the doctor at the clinic that he would be referred for an echocardiogram (a scan used to look at the heart and nearby blood vessels) and an exercise test and that it would be four to six weeks until the tests were carried out. Mr C said that when he phoned the board four weeks later, he was told there was a 28-week waiting time for the echocardiogram/exercise test from date of referral.

Having complained to the board about the delay and received no response, Mr C arranged to have the echocardiogram/exercise test done privately and it was carried out that month. Mr C said that two weeks after the test, the board advised him that he would be given an appointment for the test in two weeks' time. Mr C said that had he known this he would not have arranged the test himself. Mr C also complained that the board unreasonably refused to pay the costs of the test he obtained privately.

We obtained independent medical advice on the complaint from a consultant physician in respiratory and general medicine. The adviser said that in Mr C's case, the echocardiogram and exercise tests would be considered routine, rather than urgent. The adviser said the original waiting time given by the doctor of four to six weeks would have been given in good faith and as the test would be provided outwith his own department, they would probably not have been aware of the actual wait. The adviser said a 28-week wait for the test was undesirable but was an unfortunate consequence of resourcing issues at the board.

Whilst it was understandable that Mr C was anxious to determine the cause of his symptoms and therefore arranged for the tests to be done privately, we considered it was not unreasonable for the board to refuse to pay the costs of Mr C's private treatment.