

SPSO decision report

Case: 201608063, Golden Jubilee National Hospital
Sector: health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the care and treatment provided to his late wife (Mrs A) at Golden Jubilee National Hospital. Mrs A had been diagnosed with bladder cancer by another health board, but before being able to receive treatment for the cancer had suffered a heart attack. She was referred to the hospital for cardiac surgery. Mrs A was to receive treatment for the bladder cancer after having cardiac surgery. However, by the time she had recovered sufficiently from the cardiac surgery, the cancer had progressed and curative treatment was no longer possible. Mr C said that there had been unreasonable delays in Mrs A undergoing cardiac surgery, that informed consent had not been obtained for Mrs A's cardiac surgery, and that there had been unreasonable failings in communication between the specialists treating Mrs A.

We took independent advice from a cardiac surgeon. The adviser commented that the hospital could have considered treating Mrs A as an in-patient at an earlier point, as this may have been a more holistic approach given her co-existing cancer diagnosis. However, we found that although Mrs A's cardiac surgery had been postponed several times, it was still carried out in a reasonable and appropriate timeframe from a cardiac point of view.

Mr C had been concerned that staff at the hospital were aware that Mrs A would not be able to undergo treatment for her bladder cancer and therefore her consent to undergo cardiac treatment, which had been based on her understanding that without it she would not be able to have her bladder cancer treated, was not fully informed. Our investigation found that throughout Mrs A's patient journey at the hospital, all staff had been working under the impression that her bladder cancer was operable. We did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

We found that after Mrs A's cardiac surgery, staff at the hospital failed to send a discharge letter to the other health board to inform them that the surgery had been successfully carried out. We found this to be unreasonable. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint, but considered that the hospital had already taken steps to address this issue and therefore made no further recommendations.

Recommendations

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Treatment for patients that require heart treatment prior to cancer treatment should be planned holistically.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.