

SPSO decision report

Case: 201700144, Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the standard of medical care and treatment provided to her late husband (Mr A) at Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary. Mr A had a complex medical history and his condition deteriorated soon after admission. He was first transferred to the high dependency unit and then the intensive care unit. Mr A died a few weeks after he was admitted. Mrs C was concerned that medical staff failed to recognise the significance of his deterioration, diagnose him and refer him to the intensive care unit within a reasonable time. Mrs C was also concerned about treatment decisions and management, and lack of communication from medical staff.

We took independent advice from an adviser who specialises in general medicine. We were satisfied that the overall standard of medical care and treatment provided was reasonable and we did not uphold Mrs C's complaint. However, we found failures in communication and that Mr A and Mrs C were not kept updated about his condition as they should have been. We made recommendations to the board in light of these findings.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for the shortcomings in communication. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

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

- Staff should ensure they keep patients and/or their families/carers regularly updated.