

SPSO decision report

Case: 201704709, Fife NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the care and treatment provided to his late father (Mr A) at Whyteman's Brae Hospital. Mr A had been diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis (an autoimmune disease that causes pain, swelling and stiffness in the joints) and was reviewed in the rheumatology department over the following 18 months. Mr A subsequently became unwell with a respiratory illness and he was admitted to another hospital. Mr A's condition continued to deteriorate during the admission and he died. Mr C complained to the board about the way the rheumatology department assessed, monitored, and treated his father for rheumatoid arthritis. He felt that poor clinical management in the department had resulted in Mr A's deterioration and subsequent death.

We took independent advice from a rheumatology specialist. We found that the assessment, treatment and monitoring of Mr A's condition was of a good standard. We did not consider that there were any significant omissions in his care or any failure to act on symptoms reported by Mr A. While the adviser said that Mr A had an acute respiratory illness that may have been related to the use of one of the medications he was prescribed, they did not consider that this was evidence of a failing in Mr A's care. We found that the board provided Mr A with reasonable care and treatment and did not uphold Mr C's complaint. However, we found that there were unreasonable delays in letters from the board being typed and sent to Mr A's GP and made a recommendation in light of this finding.

Recommendations

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

- Communication between secondary care and primary care should be timely.

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.