

SPSO decision report

Case: 201708602, East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: health and social care
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the out-of-hours care provided to his mother (Mrs A) by the partnership. Mrs A was started on antibiotics for cellulitis (a bacterial infection of the skin and tissues beneath the skin) but the following day Mr C rang NHS 24 as he remained concerned about her symptoms. An out-of-hours doctor visited Mrs A at home to further assess her condition. A few hours after the home visit, Mr C rang NHS 24 again raising concerns about a deterioration in Mrs A's condition and an ambulance was arranged. Mrs A was admitted to intensive care with sepsis. Mr C complained that the out-of-hours doctor failed to recognise the potential seriousness of Mrs A's symptoms and failed to arrange hospital admission.

We took independent medical advice from a general practitioner. We found that the doctor carried out an appropriate examination and assessed Mrs A as being clinically stable. We were satisfied that the doctor took reasonable account of the family's concerns. We found that the doctor did not overlook any significant signs or symptoms, and noted in particular that Mrs A's presenting symptoms did not meet the high-risk criteria for urgent emergency care. We also noted that the doctor provided appropriate advice to attend A&E if Mrs A's condition worsened. We considered that the out-of-hours care provided by the partnership was reasonable and did not uphold Mr C's complaint.