

SPSO decision report

Case: 201802151, Highland NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: nurses / nursing care

Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the nursing care her mother (Mrs A) received at Raigmore Hospital. Mrs A suffered from osteoporosis (weak or fragile bones) and fell during an admission to the hospital. A number of weeks following her discharge from hospital, Mrs A's GP arranged for x-rays to be taken which showed that she had suffered two fractures to her spine. Ms C complained that nursing staff failed to appropriately care for Mrs A following her fall.

We took independent advice from a nurse who is experienced in hospital falls prevention. We found that the nurses who attended Mrs A failed to act in accordance with falls prevention guidance. There was no record that an adequate assessment had been carried out to establish if Mrs A had sustained an injury following the fall. There was also a failure to arrange a medical review for Mrs A. We were unable to find out when the fractures actually occurred as Mrs A did not report to staff that she was in pain at the time and the actual diagnosis of fractures was not made until a number of weeks following the fall. However, we considered that the failings identified were unreasonable and upheld Ms C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs A for failing to act in accordance with the guidance following her fall and failing to arrange a medical review. 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:

- Nursing staff should ensure that action is taken in accordance with guidance in relation to in-patient falls and ensure that a record is made on which examinations have taken place and that a medical review is arranged.