

SPSO decision report

Case: 201908028, Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment of their late partner (A) who died from a pulmonary embolism (a clot in the blood vessel that transports blood from the heart to the lungs), secondary to a deep vein thrombosis (DVT, a blood clot in a vein). The complaint related to a GP practice run by the board, which A attended feeling unwell. A was given antibiotics for a suspected infection and a sick note for their employer. A phoned the practice the following week, still feeling unwell, and the antibiotic prescription and sick note were extended. A's condition deteriorated and they died the following day.

C complained that the GP dismissed the recent history of A's long-haul travel and symptoms indicative of a DVT and misdiagnosed A with an infection. They considered that there was a failure to follow the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines for assessing the possibility of a DVT. C also complained that arrangements were not made for A to be seen when they called the practice the following week. They considered A was denied appropriate follow-up care.

We took independent medical advice from a GP. We found that the recorded symptoms that A presented with were consistent with a diagnosis of infection and not DVT. We considered that the GP's recorded examination, history and working diagnosis were reasonable at that time.

In terms of A's follow-up phone call to the practice, we were unable to evidence what was said during the call and whether an appointment was requested. We noted that it is common practice for antibiotic prescriptions and sick notes to be extended without seeing the patient, and we considered that the practice's actions were reasonable based upon the available evidence. We did not uphold C's complaints.