

SPSO decision report

Case: 202102814, Golden Jubilee National Hospital
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment provided to their parent (A) during their admission to hospital for a knee replacement. A said that they woke up during their surgery.

The board responded to the complaint noting that there was no evidence A woke up during surgery. C and A were unhappy with this response and brought their complaint to our office.

We took independent advice from a consultant anaesthetist (specialist doctors responsible for providing anaesthesia and pain management to patients before, during and after operations and surgical procedures) and asked the board to comment on issues we had identified.

The board explained that A had been under a deep sedation during the procedure and provided further details about the management of A's sedation. They confirmed that A had to receive a 'top up' in medication during the procedure and had reflected on the manner of their complaint response and the detail they had originally provided and offered to make an apology to A.

We found that the procedure was undertaken with a spinal anaesthesia and sedation rather than under general anaesthetic. We noted that the board's explanation with respect to managing A during the procedure was reasonable but confirmed that A did wake up. A did not appear to be aware this could be a possibility given they were not under general anaesthetic.

We considered that while A did wake up, this was not due to inappropriate or unreasonable levels of care. Indeed, it was possible it could happen and it was handled appropriately. Therefore, we did not uphold C's complaint.

However, we concluded that the board should have acknowledged that A woke up during the procedure and provided C and A with an explanation as to why this happened and how this was managed. Therefore, we found that the hospital failed to appropriately investigate and respond to C's complaint and made a recommendation to address this.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C and A for the lack of detail contained in the complaints response and for providing misleading information regarding the circumstances of A becoming aware during the surgery. It would be appropriate to acknowledge the significant impact the lack of a clear response from the outset has had on both C and A. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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.