

SPSO decision report

Case: 202311847, Borders NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment provided to their late spouse (A) by the board. A, who suffered from Polycythaemia Rubra Vera (PV, a blood cancer), died in hospital. At the time of their admission they were seen to be suffering from anaemia, likely as a side effect of their PV medication.

Following a post-mortem, a pathologist noted that A had developed sepsis due to a bacterial infection and that A's PV had progressed into leukaemia. C complained that the leukaemia was not diagnosed prior to A's death, and questioned whether the care and treatment provided to A had been reasonable.

We took independent advice from two appropriately qualified advisers: a haematologist (specialist in blood disorders) and a consultant geriatrician (specialist in medicine of the elderly).

We found that from a haematology perspective, A's care and treatment was reasonable. Appropriate blood tests had been undertaken and A had received appropriate treatment for anaemia. It did not appear that a transformation from PV to leukaemia had been missed.

From a general medical perspective, we found that the approach taken to diagnosis, and the treatment plan provided were also reasonable, and that appropriate care was provided in response to A developing sepsis. Overall, we did not consider that A's medical care and treatment had been unreasonable. Therefore, we did not uphold C's complaint.