

SPSO decision report



Case: 202411910, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division
Sector: Health
Subject: Delays in diagnosis / treatment
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment they received from the board at the Royal Alexandra Hospital. C said that the board failed to advise them and their GP that the CT of their chest showed heavy calcification of the left anterior artery (buildup of calcium which can lead to heart disease).

We took independent advice on the complaint from appropriately qualified advisers - a consultant physician and a consultant radiologist. We found that the report of C's CT scan was reasonable. However, the importance of left anterior descending coronary artery disease and risk factor modification should have been raised in the letter to C and their GP to ensure that appropriate ongoing management was triggered. Therefore, we upheld this part of C's complaint.

C also complained about the handling of their complaint. We found that the board did not follow their policy in this case as they did not provide C with any warnings about their communications with them before they withdrew from the investigation of C's complaint, nor did they allow C to appeal the decision.

We also considered that C's letter to a consultant was an expression of dissatisfaction with the service they had received from the board and should have been identified as a complaint and dealt with under stage 1 of the NHS Model Complaints Handling Procedure, with C being directed to stage 2 if they were dissatisfied with the response. Therefore, we upheld this part of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/meaningful-apologies.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Letters from consultant physicians to patients' GPs should raise the importance of left anterior descending coronary artery disease and risk factor modification in cases such as these to ensure that appropriate ongoing management is triggered.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The board should correctly apply the provisions of the NHS Model Complaints Handling Procedure and their Complaints Engagement Policy when dealing with complainants.

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.