

SPSO decision report

Case: 201104651, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C's mother (Mrs A) was admitted to hospital with community-acquired pneumonia. During her stay, Mrs A also complained of constipation, nausea and vomiting. On the final day of her admission, Mrs A's condition worsened considerably. She was transferred to the hospital's medical high care area and, within hours, to the highest level of care within the intensive care unit, where she died.

Ms C considered that the care provided to her mother was inadequate. In particular, she felt that staff failed to properly address Mrs A's constipation and that nursing staff acted rudely and unprofessionally towards Ms C and her family. Ms C also considered that medical staff failed to act quickly enough to transfer Mrs A to medical high care and felt that, if Mrs A had been transferred earlier, she might not have died.

We did not uphold Ms C's complaints. After obtaining independent advice from our nursing adviser, we decided that the nursing care provided to Mrs A was reasonable, that nursing staff acted appropriately to the reports of constipation and that recorded communication with Ms C and her family was reasonable. As there was no corroboration of events, we were unable to come to an accurate conclusion about the manners of particular nursing staff. We also obtained independent advice from our medical adviser, and found that medical staff took appropriate action to monitor Mrs A's condition and investigated and addressed her medical problems reasonably. We found that the timing of Mrs A's transfer to medical high care was reasonable and saw no evidence to suggest that staff should have taken the decision to transfer her earlier.