

SPSO decision report

Case: 201101161, Lothian NHS Board - University Hospitals Division
Sector: health
Subject: communication, staff attitude, dignity, confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that doctors were insensitive in the way that they told her husband (Mr C) that he had terminal cancer.

We acknowledged that it must have been extremely distressing for Mr C to receive the news that he had terminal cancer, particularly as this was the only hospital appointment that he attended alone. However, our medical adviser said that it was appropriate to be frank and open in such circumstances. We found no objective evidence that doctors were insensitive in the way that they communicated Mr C's prognosis to him.