

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200180, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the care and treatment provided to her late husband (Mr C), who had heart problems, during three admissions to hospital. Mr C was to have an operation to improve the blood flow to his heart. Mrs C said that, over the three admissions, her husband's transfer to a second hospital for the procedure was cancelled five times. He was eventually transferred, but died late the following evening. Mrs C also complained that it was unreasonable that she was referred to the second hospital for information about the cancellations, and that the board's response to her complaint glossed over the reasons for one of Mr C's discharges from hospital and was not consistent with the response from the second hospital.

Our investigation, which included taking independent advice from a medical adviser who is a consultant cardiologist (heart specialist), found that the reasons for the multiple cancellations of Mr C's transfer were all medically based. The adviser was of the view that each of the cancellations was reasonable, based on his clinical condition at the time. They also said that the procedure he was to undergo was designed to relieve chest pain. However, because of his other serious medical conditions, even if the procedure had been carried out during Mr C's first admission to hospital it would have been unlikely to have changed the eventual outcome or to have prolonged his life. This is because Mr C's eventual condition would not have been cured, altered or improved by the procedure.

On the matter of Mrs C being referred to the second hospital for further information on the cancellations, we found this was not unreasonable. Cancellation decisions were made jointly on the basis of her husband's clinical condition and the second hospital had the final say in whether or not he was fit to undergo the procedure. It was, therefore, reasonable that Mrs C should be referred to them for further information. Our investigation also found that the reasons for her husband's discharge were clear and had been made clear at the time. He was discharged so that another medical condition could be addressed to try to ensure that he was fit enough to undergo the surgical procedure, and we took the view that this was reasonable. Similarly, we found that there was no contradiction in the information provided in the complaint responses. Although we appreciated that this had been a very difficult time for Mrs C and her husband, we were satisfied that the overall care and treatment provided was reasonable.