

SPSO decision report

Case: 201201338, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of his wife (Mrs A) about the care and treatment she received when she attended hospital with an injury to her vertebrae (part of her spine) after falling down stairs. Mr C said the board failed to arrange appropriate pain relief for his wife before she was discharged from hospital, failed to provide her with an appropriate service for fitting her neck brace and did not carry out an independent investigation of his complaint.

After obtaining independent advice from one of our medical advisers, who is an orthopaedic surgeon, we did not uphold Mr C's complaints. The adviser said that Mrs A's medical records showed that her reported pain at the time of discharge was low. He considered it reasonable for the hospital not to supply pain killers and that it would have been reasonable for Mr C or his wife to purchase over the counter any pain killers that she might have needed. The adviser also confirmed that a brace was required for Mrs C's injury. Although there was some dispute over how the brace came to be badly fitted or who noticed this, the adviser indicated that appropriate action was taken to fix the problem once it was identified. He also indicated that there was no evidence in Mrs A's medical records of her having any confusion on the afternoon of her discharge, and so it was reasonable that she was given instructions on how to fit and remove her brace. The adviser said that, in his view, Mrs A's medical treatment was entirely appropriate.

On the matter of the complaints handling, the evidence showed that the orthotist (person specialising in the use of devices to support or control part of the body) concerned was not part of the team who carried out the investigation of Mr C's complaint. Her only involvement in the investigation was to provide a statement of her account of events and to verify that it was accurately reflected in the board's decision letter. We considered this to be entirely reasonable.