

SPSO decision report

Case: 201201476, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: communication, staff attitude, dignity, confidentiality

Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the care and treatment of his late mother (Mrs A) when she was admitted to hospital. Mrs A suffered from cognitive impairment (a condition that affects the ability to think, concentrate, formulate ideas, reason and remember) and had difficulty settling. Although Mr C's sister offered to come in to help her go to sleep, staff refused the offer. Mr C said that, when he visited on the evening of her admission, he found his mother 'trapped' in a chair behind a desk at the nursing station. She was cold, with no blanket, socks or slippers. Mr C said that throughout her stay in hospital his mother received only basic care and, although she was diagnosed as having gastric cancer at the end of her stay, she was discharged the next day without a care plan in place and with only a box of paracetamol.

Mr C said that the board did not deal with his family reasonably on the day his mother was admitted to hospital, nor did they make reasonable arrangements for Mrs A's discharge. Mr C was also unhappy with the way in which the board responded to his subsequent complaint.

Our investigation took all the relevant information into account, including the complaints correspondence and Mrs A's clinical notes. We also obtained independent nursing advice. The adviser said that while it was not clear why Mrs A was in the chair on the evening of her admission, she had been there too long. The adviser also said that the offer of assistance should perhaps have been accepted, and that communication with Mr C and his family that day was poor. Because of this, on balance we upheld the complaints about communication and Mrs A's overall care and treatment, although we found that her medical care was reasonable. We found that a discharge plan was available for Mrs A, but there was no evidence that it had been communicated adequately to her family or her GP and so, although we did not uphold this complaint, we made a recommendation. Our investigation found that the board had reasonably dealt with Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- formally remind staff on the ward of the professionalism required of them;
- remind appropriate staff of the necessity of completing patients' records properly and fully; and
- advise the Ombudsman of the action since taken to prevent such a situation recurring, and if no action has been taken, advise what is proposed.