

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202585, A Medical Practice in the Highland NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C was discharged from hospital after having major surgery to remove tumours from his stomach area. When the district nurse attended she noted that the wound, which was substantial, had reopened. She called the medical practice to request an ambulance. The GP was visiting patients at the time and could not be located. Mr C's wife said that if the GP could not be located within five minutes she would call the ambulance, which she did. By this time the GP was on his way to Mr C's house but, when he was advised that an ambulance had been called, he returned to the surgery. Mr C complained that the practice did not immediately call for an ambulance.

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers, who explained that it was reasonable for the GP to wish to assess Mr C before deciding whether an ambulance was necessary. He commented that in this case it was probably necessary, but that it might not have been necessary to call an emergency ambulance. He also pointed out that the district nurse would know that she could call an ambulance directly by phoning 999 if this was required.

As our investigation found that the practice acted reasonably, and as we noted that the ambulance would not have arrived any more quickly had the GP reviewed Mr C first, we did not uphold this complaint.