

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203273, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C was on holiday when he was taken ill while on a moored boat. He called 999 but was told that as his condition was not life-threatening he should call NHS 24. When he did so, they said they would ask an out-of-hours doctor at a local hospital to call Mr C within an hour. Mr C complained that the out-of-hours doctor would not arrange an ambulance to take him to hospital, and instead gave him the number of local GP surgeries he could contact. Mr C said that he was in great pain and could not walk, but with assistance managed to get back to his holiday home. When he got there, an ambulance was called and Mr C was taken to hospital. Mr C felt the out-of-hours doctor should have arranged an ambulance to take him to hospital in the first instance.

Our investigation found that there was a difference of opinion between the out-of-hours doctor and Mr C about his ability to get off the boat, but the information in the records did not help us resolve this. We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers, who said that there was no evidence to suggest an emergency ambulance was required, and that the out-of-hours doctor had provided appropriate advice. This was that, should Mr C's condition worsen, he should contact the emergency service again. It was also appropriate for the out-of-hours doctor to suggest that Mr C should contact a general practitioner who might have been willing to visit him on the boat.