

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203826, Lanarkshire NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that there was an unreasonable delay in diagnosing his wife (Mrs C)'s cancer. Mr C said that tests dating back to 2005 contained suspicious results that the hospital should have acted upon. He said that he had specifically asked if there was a possibility that his wife had cancer and had been told there was not. He also questioned why, after his wife had been assessed as unfit to have a biopsy, one was undertaken about five months later, when her health had deteriorated.

After taking independent advice from a medical adviser, we did not uphold Mr C's complaint. The adviser noted that his wife had other serious health conditions, including tuberculosis (a bacterial infection mainly affecting the lungs) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (a disease of the lungs in which the airways become narrowed). The adviser also noted that it was likely that the cause of the mass that Mr C thought was indicative of cancer in 2005 was likely to have been caused by Mrs C's tuberculosis. Our investigation, therefore, found that the actions of the hospital were, therefore, reasonable and appropriate. Although we did not uphold the complaint, we noted that the clinical team at the hospital did not seem to have been able to effectively communicate the seriousness of Mrs C's health problems to the couple.