

SPSO decision report

Case: 201301094, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C, who is an advice worker, complained to us on behalf of Ms B about the care and treatment of her late father (Mr A) during an out-of-hours GP visit. This visit came shortly after Mr A had been diagnosed with lung cancer.

Ms B said that her father had become increasingly short of breath and was looking very unwell. The family called NHS 24 and requested a home visit. Mr A spoke to a nurse on the phone, and was assessed as needing a home visit within an hour. Ms B asked that the GP not mention the new cancer diagnosis to her father, as he was not fully aware of it. About half an hour after the call, a GP arrived. She assessed Mr A's condition, and listened to his chest. She noted his vital signs, and as not all her equipment was working fully, she judged his temperature by touch and found that he did not have a fever. Following discussion with the family, Mr A was not transferred to hospital, but was given medication for his cough and to reduce pain. Shortly after the GP left, Mr A collapsed and had to be resuscitated by his family until an ambulance came. He was taken to hospital, where he died the following afternoon.

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers, who based their findings on the notes made by the GP at the time. We noted, however, that the accounts given by the GP and Ms B in relation to what happened during the visit were somewhat different. Our adviser said that during the consultation the GP took appropriate action in relation to her assessment of Mr A's condition. She had taken account of Mr A's medical history, and took the family's views into consideration in suggesting that he remain at home and be reviewed by his GP the following morning. However, the adviser was slightly critical of the level of detail in the GP's notes.

In coming to a decision on this complaint, we were not able to determine what exactly happened during the consultation, given the conflicting accounts. However, based on the clinical records made at the time, the advice we were given indicated that the GP assessed Mr A's condition appropriately, and appropriately considered the family's wishes when planning treatment.