

SPSO decision report

Case: 201303031, A Medical Practice in the Lothian NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr A had been suffering from a number of serious medical conditions including lupus (an autoimmune condition that affects the body's defences against illnesses and infections). Mr A was discharged from hospital into the care of his medical practice. He was readmitted several days later, after a visit from an out-of-hours doctor, and died the day after readmission. Mr A's son (Mr C) complained that after Mr A was discharged from hospital there was a lack of reasonable care by the practice. Mr C was concerned that no doctor from the practice visited his father at home, despite both Mr A and Mr C speaking to different doctors there.

In response to the complaint, the practice said that they would not routinely visit a patient after they were discharged from a hospital unless there were special circumstances. They took the view that there were no urgent concerns about Mr A at that time. They had received Mr A's discharge summary from the hospital after he had already been at home for several days. Doctors in the practice had spoken with both Mr C and Mr A by phone, and with the district nurse who had been visiting Mr A at home, and the practice had arranged for a doctor to visit Mr A at home in the coming days for review.

We took independent advice about the complaint from one of our medical advisers. The adviser was of the view that the practice had not failed in their care of Mr A, and that the hospital discharge letter, received several days after Mr A's discharge, did not indicate any issue that needed a doctor to visit. In addition, the adviser said that the information that Mr A, Mr C and the district nurse gave the practice did not highlight anything suggesting that Mr A needed to be reviewed sooner than planned. We accepted the adviser's view that, from the information presented to the practice at the time, the care and treatment they gave Mr A after he was discharged from hospital was reasonable and appropriate.