

SPSO decision report

Case: 201400264, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: Hygiene / cleanliness / infection control
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C, an advocate, complained on behalf of her client (Mr A) about the infection control procedures used by Raigmore Hospital when he had a total hip replacement.

When Mr A attended the pre-operative assessment when he was first scheduled for surgery, it was found that he had an in-growing toenail and surgery was delayed until this was treated. When the operation was re-scheduled, additional testing was undertaken to establish if Mr A had any on-going underlying infection and all the tests were negative. The operation took place and during the surgery samples of fluid and tissue were taken for laboratory analysis and Mr A was also given precautionary antibiotics (drugs used to fight bacterial infections). The samples taken were positive for infection which proved very difficult to eradicate, resulting in a long recovery period for Mr A, including that his hip replacement implant had to be removed while the infection was treated and then a new implant put in.

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers who was satisfied that the board's infection control procedures were compliant with national guidance and that these procedures were followed appropriately. The adviser commented that no testing can fully eliminate the possibility of deep-seated infection and the adviser was of the view that the infection present in Mr A's hip during his operation had probably originated from his previous in-growing toenail. The adviser also considered that the fact that Mr A was a diabetic contributed to the lengthy recovery period as diabetics do not fight infections as quickly as non-diabetics.