

SPSO decision report

Case: 201400278, Lanarkshire NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C attended A&E at Monklands Hospital in the early hours of the morning with her daughter (Miss A), who was given a liquid steroid to treat croup (an infection of the voice box and windpipe) before being discharged. Later that same day, and after speaking with NHS 24, Mrs C returned to A&E because she felt that Miss A's condition had not improved. Mrs C said she was advised that an out-of-hours (OOH) appointment had been booked for her daughter that evening but that she did not know about it. A nurse examined Miss A, and after a discussion with the duty consultant, advised Mrs C that she could take her daughter home. The following day, Mrs C visited her doctor for an unrelated issue and whilst there, the doctor examined Miss A and confirmed there was a slight wheeze so prescribed steroids. Because of this, Mrs C complained that the care and treatment provided to her daughter in A&E was unreasonable.

The board told Mrs C that because Miss A was well and had a normal set of observations, the duty consultant felt it would be best if she was allowed to attend her booked OOH appointment. They said this was because it was unlikely that she would be seen by an A&E doctor earlier than the time of the scheduled appointment later that evening. However, when we examined the evidence, we identified that the scheduled appointment had already been cancelled because Miss A was seen in A&E. When we asked the board about this, they told us that the appointment with the OOH service would have been cancelled when Mrs C arrived at reception in the A&E department. The board said the receptionists for both services sat side by side and would have liaised with each other about this.

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers, but he said he was unable to say whether the care and treatment provided to Miss A by the A&E department was reasonable, given that the duty consultant made an incorrect assumption that her OOH appointment was still booked for later in the evening that day. We found that the consultant appeared to have taken the decision to allow Miss A to leave A&E on the basis of inaccurate information and because of that, we upheld Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise to Mrs C for the failure our investigation identified; and
- take steps to review what happened in Mrs C's case and ensure appropriate measures are in place to prevent the same thing from happening again.