

SPSO decision report

Case: 201400540, A Medical Practice in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C, who is an advice worker, complained on behalf of her client (Mr A) that his medical practice had failed to properly assess his symptoms and provide him with further tests to determine his increased risk of stroke. Mr A had attended the practice on a number of occasions with various symptoms. There was a history of heart and circulatory disease in his family and he was concerned that he had had a stroke.

We obtained independent medical advice on the complaint from one of our medical advisers. Although Mr A did subsequently have a stroke, the advice we received was that the symptoms with which he had presented to the practice did not suggest that he had suffered a stroke at that time. The adviser said that his symptoms were reasonably explained by other, more likely, diagnoses. Although we found that Mr A's concerns had not been fully addressed, the practice properly assessed the symptoms he presented with and arranged the appropriate tests. We found that they had acted reasonably and did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Mrs C told us that Mr A later did have a stroke and phoned the practice as soon as he realised what had happened. The practice recorded that he said that he was struggling to hold a cup in his left arm and was now having to drag his leg. They recorded that there was no mention of his arm being affected in the previous notes and that he might have suffered a stroke. They arranged an appointment for him later that day. However, Mr A instead went to hospital and was admitted to the stroke unit. We found that, based on the record of the phone discussion with Mr A, the correct course of action in line with relevant national guidance would have been for the practice to phone a blue light ambulance to take him to hospital. If the practice considered that there were good reasons for not doing so, at the very least, they should have recorded the reasons and arranged to examine Mr A immediately. The action they took was not appropriate and so we upheld this aspect of Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- issue a written apology to Mr A for inappropriately telling him to attend an appointment later that day, when it was recorded that he had potentially suffered a stroke;
- make the GP that Mr A spoke to aware of our decision on this matter; and
- confirm that the matter will be discussed at the GP's next annual appraisal.