

SPSO decision report

Case: 201400931, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained to us about the Glasgow Dental Hospital's decision to give her son (Mr A) colchicine (a medication normally used to treat gout) to treat his mouth ulcers. Mr A had mental health problems and subsequently died from an overdose of the medication. Mrs C said that the medication was not listed as a treatment for mouth ulcers. She also considered that the doctor who had recommended the prescription of the medication had failed to adequately assess the risks of giving this to Mr A, in view of his mental health problems and previous suicide attempts by overdosing.

We took independent advice on Mrs C's complaint from an adviser who is a consultant in oral medicine. We found that colchicine is an appropriate choice of drug for mouth ulcers. It had been reasonable to give this to Mr A because the ulcers extended into his throat and other treatments had not been successful. The doctor had been aware of Mr A's mental health problems and of his suicide attempts by overdosing. The doctor considered that the risks of this happening again were mitigated as Mr A received his medication on a daily basis to reduce the chance of overdosing. We considered that, based on the evidence available at the time, it had been reasonable for the doctor to decide that Mr A should be given colchicine. We did not uphold the complaint.