

SPSO decision report

Case: 201402569, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained to us about the care and treatment her husband (Mr C) had received from the Royal Edinburgh Hospital before his death. She said that staff had failed to take symptoms Mr C had been experiencing over a number of years into account and this had led to a delay in diagnosing cerebral atrophy (shrinkage of the brain). Mr C had been receiving treatment from the hospital for a number of years for depression and obsessive compulsive disorder and had been admitted there on a number of occasions. His physical condition then deteriorated significantly and he was admitted to another hospital for treatment. He died there six weeks later. The cause of death recorded on his death certificate was acute delirium with cerebrovascular disease (disease of the blood vessels in the brain).

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers, who is an experienced psychiatrist. They said they did not consider that cerebral atrophy had been the major cause of Mr C's relatively rapid physical decline and subsequent death. Although a CT scan (a scan that uses a computer to produce an image of the body) taken a number of years before Mr C's death had shown cerebral atrophy, this was of normal appearance for a man of Mr C's age. There had been no reason to provide treatment or to take further scans to monitor this.

Our adviser said that the care provided to Mr C by the hospital had been well documented and had been delivered in an appropriate multi-disciplinary manner. We also found that the relevant treatment plans were clear and logical and that Mr C and his family had been involved in the care he received. The diagnoses were discussed with the family and their views were taken into account. We did not, therefore, uphold the complaint.