

SPSO decision report

Case: 201404505, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: complaints handling

Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to us about the care and treatment his mother (Mrs A) received from the medical practice after a GP visited Mrs A's home as she had abdominal pain. Mr C told us that the GP examined his mother, gave her an injection for pain and called an ambulance. He said that the GP spent approximately 15 minutes with his mother before leaving. Mr C said that the ambulance arrived two and a half hours later and during this time his mother's pain worsened. He said that the ambulance crew expressed shock at Mrs A's condition and gave her more pain medication before taking her to hospital. When he went to the practice to complain, he felt that the GP was aggressive towards him. He also said that he asked for information on making a complaint and was told there were no specific forms and that each practice is different.

The practice said that they provided proper care and treatment. The GP said that as Mrs A had family support and her condition was not considered life threatening, it was appropriate to leave and return to other patients at the surgery. The practice said that Mrs A's family did not call them to say that she was worse. They apologised for confusion about the complaints form and explained that although they do not have such forms they do have a procedure, and complaints can be made in writing. They said that they were not aggressive towards Mr C – they in fact felt that he had been aggressive towards them, and they had sent him a formal warning.

We took independent advice from one of our GP advisers, who said that the GP provided reasonable care. Our adviser was of the view that the pain relief given and the decision to request an ambulance within a two hour window were reasonable. The Scottish Ambulance Service provided evidence during our investigation that their crew that day had no recollection of criticising the GP and or of expressing shock at Mrs A's condition. We did not uphold this complaint.

We did uphold Mr C's complaint about the practice's complaints handling. Although they responded to his complaint well, he had asked for complaints handling information and been told there was none. They should have referred to the NHS Scotland 'Can I help you?' guidance and provided information on the process they would use to deal with his complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- ensure that all practice staff are aware of the NHS Scotland 'Can I help you?' guidance and ensure that the practice leaflets on the complaints handling process, detailed on the practice website, are available to patients and staff.