

SPSO decision report

Case: 201404527, A Medical Practice in the Lothian NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs A had fallen at home and sustained a head injury and suspected fractured hip. She had contacted the medical practice and a GP attended and decided that she required to be taken to hospital. The GP arranged that an ambulance should attend within an hour and left Mrs A with a neighbour to wait for the ambulance. Mrs A's daughter (Mrs C) complained that the GP should have arranged an emergency ambulance and should have waited with Mrs A, who is elderly, until its arrival. The practice maintained that Mrs A was stable and the situation was not life-threatening and the GP was satisfied that she did not need to wait for the arrival of the ambulance.

We took independent medical advice from one of our GP advisers, who said that given the situation, Mrs A required an immediate ambulance and the GP should have remained with her in case she deteriorated. The adviser noted that Mrs A was immobile; had symptoms of a hip fracture; had a significant head injury which was bleeding; was unable to recall how the fall occurred; and had a complex medical history. Our adviser was also concerned that the GP had noted the possibility that Mrs A may have required a brain scan to rule out any possible bleed to the brain. In light of this advice, we upheld Mrs C's complaint that the GP failed to provide Mrs A with appropriate medical treatment when she attended the home visit.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- apologise to Mrs A for the failure to arrange an emergency ambulance; and
- ensure the GP reflects on the comments made by our adviser and discusses the matter at their annual appraisal.