

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201407521, Lanarkshire NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C was concerned about the care and treatment given to her late mother (Mrs A) at Wishaw Hospital. She felt that Mrs A's symptoms were initially not properly investigated and, had they been, her chances of survival may have been improved. She complained that, other than chemotherapy, Mrs A received little treatment. Ms C also said that the information provided to Mrs A was confusing.

The complaint was investigated and we took independent advice from a consultant general surgeon. We found that Mrs A had a type of stomach cancer that was very difficult to diagnose and was very aggressive. Because of this, there was only a very small chance of any treatment curing the cancer. Although Mrs A was given appropriate tests, the results were not regarded with enough suspicion and, despite not providing an explanation for Mrs A's symptoms, no further investigations were made. Mrs A was not diagnosed until a year later when the only treatment she could be offered was palliative chemotherapy. Mrs A died the following year. In light of our findings, this aspect of Ms C's complaint was upheld.

Mrs A initially responded well to treatment, which may have led her to question her diagnosis and the information she had been given. However, our investigation showed that discussions with Mrs A explaining her diagnosis and treatment had taken place. For this reason, we did not uphold this part of the complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- make a full, formal apology for their failure to diagnose Mrs A sooner; and
- bring the terms of this decision to the attention of the staff involved, including the endoscopist and the junior surgical doctor concerned, for them to reflect upon and discuss at their next formal appraisals.