

SPSO decision report

Case: 201500706, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C's daughter (Ms A) was admitted to Ninewells Hospital three times with severe abdominal pain and swelling accompanied by nausea. Investigations and tests were negative. Mr C complained that Ms A was discharged from hospital unreasonably, and that doctors failed to reach a diagnosis, which led to a great deal of anxiety for Ms A and her family. As a result, Mr C said that Ms A's health deteriorated.

We took independent advice from a medical adviser who is a specialist in gastroenterology (medicine of the digestive system and its disorders). We found that the board properly investigated Ms A's symptoms, and that the decision to discharge her on each occasion was reasonable because no abnormalities were found. The adviser said that a diagnosis had been reached by doctors. However, we found that this was not clearly relayed to Ms A so we understood Mr C's position that doctors had failed to reach a diagnosis. We therefore made a recommendation to put this right.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- bring the adviser's comments about functional disorders to the attention of relevant staff; and
- offer to meet with Ms A to fully explain the reasons for the referral to a chronic pain team.