

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507868, Fife NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about his treatment at Victoria Hospital. Mr C had injured his shoulder and felt the care and treatment provided by A&E was not reasonable. Mr C said his examination had been inadequate and inappropriately carried out and that he had been referred first for physiotherapy, rather than orthopaedic examination.

Mr C's physiotherapist diagnosed a serious injury and Mr C was referred to an orthopaedic specialist. He underwent a scan and was told he was not suitable for surgery as he was too old and the joint had suffered too much wear and tear. Mr C received a further examination as part of a second opinion offered by the board. This examination found Mr C to be a suitable candidate for surgery and he underwent a successful operation.

Mr C complained that the delay in diagnosing his shoulder injury had affected his treatment and chances of making a full recovery. We took independent advice from a consultant in emergency medicine and from a consultant orthopaedic surgeon. We were advised that Mr C had been treated appropriately in A&E and that it was normal practice to refer patients for physiotherapy in such cases. However, we were advised that Mr C's orthopaedic treatment had fallen below a reasonable standard as Mr C was within an appropriate age range for treatment. We therefore found that Mr C's orthopaedic treatment had been unreasonable.

Mr C also complained that the board had not responded reasonably to his complaints. Although the board's responses had on occasion been delayed, we found that their responses to Mr C's complaints were reasonable and so we did not uphold this aspect of his complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- provide evidence that the orthopaedic specialist has reflected on the case and in particular the assessment of the adviser on Mr C's suitability for surgery; and
- apologise to Mr C for the failings identified in this report.