

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507873, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the care and treatment provided following an injury to her shoulder. Mrs C complained that A & E staff at Raigmore Hospital failed to promptly diagnose that she had multiple fractures to her arm. Mrs C also raised concerns that on her subsequent attendance at the fracture clinic, staff failed to carry out a CT scan (a scan which uses x-rays and a computer to create detailed images of the inside of the body) as a matter of urgency. Mrs C complained that the board failed to ensure that she received surgery for her shoulder within a reasonable timescale. Mrs C linked these concerns with subsequent complications in her shoulder, which led to further surgery. Mrs C complained that the board failed to provide reasonable care and treatment at the further operation she received approximately nine months after her shoulder injury. Mrs C also raised concerns about whether the board appropriately investigated her complaints.

The board said A & E had assessed and managed Mrs C appropriately. The board also considered Mrs C received a CT scan within a reasonable timeframe. The board said emergency admissions impacted on the timescale for Mrs C's surgery; however, they said she ultimately received treatment within an appropriate timescale. The board said the timescales did not impact on Mrs C's recovery. The board did not comment on Mrs C's concerns about the care and treatment provided at the second operation.

After receiving independent advice from an orthopaedic surgeon, we did not uphold Mrs C's complaints about her care and treatment. We found the A & E diagnosis had been reasonable as documented in the medical records. We found the timescales for receiving the CT scan and the surgery were reasonable. We found that it was not likely that these timescales caused Mrs C's slow recovery. We also found that the care and treatment provided at the second operation was reasonable.

We upheld Mrs C's complaint about the board's handling of her concerns. We found that, given the nature of the concerns raised, the board should have investigated further. We recommended that the board apologise to Mrs C, and remind staff of the requirements of the Scottish Government's 'Can I help you?' guidance.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise for the failings identified by this investigation; and
- remind relevant staff of the complaints handling requirements under the 'Can I help you?' guidance.