

SPSO decision report

Case: 201600483, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C raised a number of concerns about the care that her mother (Mrs A) received from her medical practice. Mrs A had been diagnosed with terminal pancreatic cancer and was receiving care in her home from a multi-disciplinary team including her GP, district nurses and a Macmillan nurse. Once Mrs A's care needs increased, her GP referred her to a specialist palliative care facility, where she died.

We found that in response to Mrs C's complaint, the practice had reflected on the care they had provided to Mrs A and had identified a number of learning points to take forward and act on. We took independent advice on the case from a GP adviser who noted Mrs C's concerns about communication, but did not find evidence that the practice had communicated unreasonably with Mrs C or Mrs A. The adviser was satisfied that the practice had provided appropriate care and treatment for Mrs A's symptoms, and that the GP's role in an investigation into potential diabetes was reasonable. The adviser did not consider that the GP unreasonably delayed visiting Mrs A after she suffered a fall, and considered that the assessment performed at the subsequent home visit and referral to a specialist palliative care facility were reasonable. We did not uphold this complaint.

Mrs C also expressed concern about the level of support and information the practice provided to her in her role as a carer. We found that the practice did not send Mrs C the range of leaflets and resources that they usually send to individuals who have been identified as carers in terms of the practice's protocol. The adviser did not consider that this was unreasonable as it was the responsibility of Mrs C's GP, rather than Mrs A's GP, to provide this information. The adviser noted that the practice had provided some information at a late stage to Mrs C and considered the practice might want to consider taking steps to ensure that any information that is provided in these circumstances is provided at an earlier stage. We did not uphold this complaint, but made a recommendation.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- feed back the findings of this investigation to practice staff to ensure that information for carers is provided at an early stage.