

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201605359, Grampian NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality  
**Decision:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C complained on behalf of her late mother (Mrs A) about the care and treatment she received from the board. Specifically, Ms C complained about a consultant geriatrician's assessment of Mrs A's condition, as well as their communication with Mrs A and her family about her condition and treatment options. Ms C also complained that an out-of-hours doctor failed to communicate appropriately about Mrs A's condition and treatment options.

During our investigation we took independent medical advice from a consultant geriatrician and from a general practitioner. We found that the out-of-hours doctor's communication was reasonable. We also found that the consultant geriatrician's assessment of Mrs A's condition was reasonable. As a result, we did not uphold these aspects of Ms C's complaint. We did find that there were failings in how the consultant geriatrician communicated with Mrs A and her family. We, therefore, upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint and made recommendations in light of our findings.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise in writing to Ms C and Mrs A for failing to communicate appropriately about Mrs A's condition and treatment options. The apology should comply with the SPSO guidelines on making an apology.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Consultants should attempt to communicate with patients during their assessments, in order to respect the patient's dignity.
- Patients or family members should be told of their right to a second opinion, or be given the opportunity for a further discussion with the clinician, if they feel dissatisfied with a clinician's assessment.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.