

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201608813, Grampian NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Decision:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C complained about the care and treatment her late mother (Mrs A) received at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. In particular, Ms C complained that her mother was not given appropriate treatment at A&E in response to her symptoms. Ms C also considered that her mother should have been transferred to the high dependency unit when her condition deteriorated. Ms C complained that nurses delayed in administering antibiotics and failed to monitor her mother closely enough. Mrs A died of sepsis (a blood infection) several hours after her admission. The board accepted an unreasonable delay in nursing staff administering antibiotics, but considered the care to have been otherwise reasonable.

During our investigation we took independent medical advice from a consultant in emergency medicine and from a nurse. The emergency medicine adviser considered that the standard of medical care and treatment at A&E was of a high standard. They also considered that it was reasonable not to transfer Mrs A to the high dependency unit as her outlook was poor, given her age, the severity of her symptoms and her pre-existing condition. The nursing adviser considered Mrs A was appropriately monitored by nursing staff. We therefore did not uphold these aspects of Ms C's complaint. However, both advisers considered there was an unreasonable delay in nursing staff administering antibiotics, although they considered that this was unlikely to have made any difference to Mrs A's condition. We upheld this aspect of the complaint and we made a recommendation in light of our findings.

### Recommendations

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

- Antibiotics should be administered by nursing staff within the agreed timeframe.

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.