

SPSO decision report

Case: 201700687, Borders NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the treatment her young daughter (Miss A) received from a doctor when she took her to the emergency department at Borders General Hospital. Miss A had been taken to see her GP the previous day with a suspected chest infection. The GP had prescribed antibiotics and told Ms C to take Miss A to the emergency department if her condition deteriorated. Ms C said that she was dissatisfied with the assessment carried out by the doctor at the emergency department, who recommended that Ms C take her daughter home to allow the antibiotics prescribed by the GP to work. Ms C asked that Miss A have a paediatric review. This was arranged and, after spending some hours in a ward, Miss A was discharged home with a supply of steroid medication. Ms C complained to us that the doctor in the emergency department failed to provide Miss A with an appropriate assessment and a reasonable level of care.

We took independent advice from a consultant in emergency medicine. We found that the doctor in the emergency department had documented a detailed history of Miss A's illness and medical history and that it was reasonable for them to have suggested that Miss A be discharged home to allow the antibiotics time to work. The doctor initially diagnosed that Miss A had a lower respiratory tract infection and had phoned a paediatric doctor for advice before making the decision to discharge Miss A home. The diagnosis was further refined to that of bronchiolitis (a viral illness). When Ms C voiced her concerns, it was arranged for Miss A to spend some hours in a paediatric ward where she was observed and then discharged home with steroid medication and to allow time for the GP prescribed antibiotics to take effect. We concluded that the doctor in the emergency department carried out an appropriate assessment of Miss A and that she received an appropriate level of care and treatment. We did not uphold the complaint.