

SPSO decision report

Case: 201703685, Lothian NHS Board - Acute Division
Sector: health
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C had knee replacement surgery at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. She also underwent manipulation under anaesthetic (MUA - a procedure to try and improve movement) to try and relieve knee stiffness after the operation. Mrs C complained about the board's communication with her following the knee replacement surgery. In particular, she complained that she was not properly informed that, should MUA be unsuccessful, there was a possibility that nothing more could be done for her knee. She also complained that she was not told why she had been sent for a second opinion.

We took independent advice from an orthopaedic consultant (a doctor who specialises in the musculoskeletal system). We found that the majority of the communication with Mrs C had been reasonable, and that the advice she was given about MUA was reasonable. However, we found that consent process for the MUA was unreasonable, and that the communication around the second opinion had been poor. On balance, we upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for the communication failings. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

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

- Patients should receive full and comprehensive information during the consent process and second opinion process.