

SPSO decision report

Case: 201704218, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: admission / discharge / transfer procedures
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C, an MP, complained on behalf of his constituent (Mr B) about the lack of care provided to his late partner (Ms A) who had attended an out-of-hours service after reporting severe pain. Ms A was examined by the GP and sent home with laxatives (medication to help increase bowel movements). Ms A subsequently collapsed at home a short time later and died. Mr B obtained a copy of the death certificate which showed evidence of bowel obstruction. Mr B felt that due to the severity of the condition, the GP should have identified the problem and that the issue could have been rectified in hospital earlier.

We took independent advice from an adviser in general practice medicine and concluded that the GP had carried out an appropriate assessment of Ms A given her reported symptoms. She had a history of constipation and was on painkilling medication which would have contributed to her constipation. It would not have been appropriate to have prescribed additional painkillers as that would have worsened the constipation. We also found no evidence of bowel obstruction and, therefore, the decision to send Ms A home with laxatives to allow them time to take effect was reasonable. We found no medical requirement for a hospital admission at that time, and there was no information within the medical history or examination which would have alerted the GP to the subsequent events, or that the laxatives would not be effective. We did not uphold Mr C's complaint.