

SPSO decision report



Case: 201704696, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C attended Queen Elizabeth University Hospital for a hernia repair operation (an operation to correct a hernia, which is a bulging of internal organs or tissues through the wall that contains them) but complained that he was not properly advised of the risks. After the surgery Mr C suffered from significant bleeding and swelling and was discharged from hospital nine days after the operation. Mr C returned a week later as he had to be readmitted for his wound to be cleaned and re-stitched. Mr C complained that both the medical and nursing care he received was unreasonable and that the board's communication with him was unreasonable.

We took independent advice from a consultant general and colorectal surgeon (colorectal surgery is the branch of surgery which deals with repairing the damage caused by disorders of the rectum, anus and colon) and from a registered nurse. We found that Mr C had signed a consent form which detailed the possible risks of surgery and did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

In relation to the medical care received, we found that there had not been consultant involvement in Mr C's discharge and that he should have been followed-up afterwards given his significant complications. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

We found that Mr C's nursing care had been reasonable and that their records were clear and detailed. We did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

Finally, we found that there was little documentation of an explanation for Mr C's complications, of the treatment options available and what he could expect. There was also no indication that Mr C had been provided with reasonable reassurance at a time when he was suffering understandable anxiety. We considered that communication with Mr C was unreasonable and upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for failing to give proper consideration to his complications after surgery. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

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

- Where significant complications develop, patients should be offered an explanation and this should be documented.
- When significant complications develop after hernia surgery, an appropriate consultant should be involved in the decision to discharge and a follow-up appointment should be made.