

SPSO decision report

Case: 201705684, Lothian NHS Board - Acute Division
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of his late wife (Mrs A). Mrs A attended the Emergency Department (ED) at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh. When she attended she was unable to walk and required a wheelchair. Mr C said that Mrs A waited for nearly four hours before she was seen by a doctor, during which time her requests for pain relief were ignored. He complained that the care and treatment given to Mrs A in the ED was unreasonable. He also complained that the board gave incorrect or inaccurate information when they responded to his complaint about this.

We took independent advice from a consultant in emergency medicine. We found that in the ED Mrs A had been appropriately examined, that many aspects of her care were reasonable and that she was appropriately discharged. However, we found that she was not assessed, and reassessed, for her pain as she should have been. We found that she was given two paracetamol three hours after arriving, and then oral morphine an hour and a half later. However, we found that this delay was unreasonable and contrary to the Royal College of Emergency Medicine guidelines. We upheld this part of Mr C's complaint.

We found no evidence that the board had provided Mr C with incorrect or inaccurate information, and so we did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C that Mrs A's pain was not promptly assessed/reassessed and for the delay in providing pain relief.

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

- The Royal College of Emergency Medicine guidelines (management of pain in adults 2014) should be implemented.

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.