

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201706917, Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Decision:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the treatment which his late brother (Mr A) received when he attended the accident and emergency department at Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary. Mr C had received a phone call from Mr A early one morning saying that he had difficulty breathing. An ambulance was called and took Mr A to the hospital. Later that morning Mr C received a further call from Mr A saying that he was being discharged from the hospital and asking Mr C to pick him up. Mr C ensured that Mr A was settled in his house. However, Mr C later learned that Mr A had died. The cause of death was heart failure and Mr C felt that more care should have been taken at the hospital and that perhaps Mr A should have been admitted for further tests.

We took independent advice from a consultant in emergency medicine. We found that the staff at the accident and emergency department had carried out an appropriate examination of Mr A at the time, which included a history of heart problems. They had taken a chest x-ray, electrocardiogram (ECG - a test to check the heart's rhythm) and blood tests. Although there were subtle signs of heart failure from the results, we concluded that it was reasonable for the staff to diagnose that Mr A was suffering from a chest infection rather than heart failure. It was also reasonable that Mr A was prescribed antibiotics and discharged home. We did not uphold the complaint.