

SPSO decision report

Case: 201708580, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained to us about the care and treatment that her late partner (Mr A) received at Aberdeen Royal Infirmary when he attended on two separate occasions with severe chest pain. Mr A died during his second attendance at the hospital.

On Mr A's first attendance at the hospital he was seen in the Acute Medical Initial Assessment Unit and the Ambulatory Emergency Care Unit. Ms C complained about the assessment and examination that Mr A received and that he was diagnosed with musculoskeletal chest pain. We took independent advice from consultant in acute medicine. We found that assessments and examinations were reasonable and in accordance with the relevant guidance for chest pain. In particular, Mr A's chest pain was viewed as cardiac until it was positively excluded by the results of a troponin blood test and an electrocardiogram (ECG - a test which measures the electrical activity of the heart to show whether or not it is working normally). We did not uphold this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

Around two months later, Mr A attended the emergency department at the hospital. Ms C complained that Mr A's condition was too serious for him to be asked to sit and wait for an initial assessment. Mr A collapsed in the emergency department waiting area. He then went into cardiac arrest (where the heart suddenly and unexpectedly stops beating) and died. We took advice from a consultant in emergency medicine. We found that it was unreasonable that Mr A was asked to sit and wait for an initial assessment when he presented to the emergency department with chest pain and shortness of breath. We upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

Recommendations