

SPSO decision report

Case: 201800372, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the treatment which she received at Peterhead Hospital and Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. Ms C had been treated for heart issues although she had not been reviewed by a cardiologist (a doctor who specialises in disorders of the heart). Ms C was subsequently admitted to hospital on two occasions where the medication for her heart issues was continued. Ms C sought a private opinion which found that she did not have a heart problem and her medication was withdrawn. As a result of the medication withdrawal, Ms C's health improved. Ms C complained that she was unreasonably prescribed heart medication and that this medication was not kept under regular review.

We took independent advice from a consultant cardiologist. We found that it was appropriate for Ms C to have been treated for suspected angina (chest pains) in view of her presenting symptoms. We considered the prescription of heart medication to be appropriate and did not uphold this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

However, there was a failure to keep Ms C under review pending the outcome of further out-patient cardiology investigations which may have identified that she was suffering from potential side effects of the medication. There was an incident on discharge from hospital that Ms C had been prescribed two calcium channel blockers (medication to relax and widen the blood vessels) which was inappropriate, although it was unlikely that harm was caused due to the low dosages involved. We also found that there were failings in record-keeping regarding discussions with cardiology staff and that it would have been advisable that Ms C should have been physically examined by a consultant cardiologist. We considered that the board failed to keep Ms C's medication under review and upheld this aspect of her complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C for the failure to keep her under review pending the outcome of further out-patient cardiology investigations. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.
- Apologise to Ms C for the failure to recognise that she had been discharged from hospital while on two types of calcium channel blocking medication. 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:

- Staff should be aware to keep patients under review pending the outcome of further out-patient cardiology investigations.
- Pharmacy and ward staff should be aware that when patients are discharged from hospital that their medication is appropriate.