

SPSO decision report

Case: 201807994, Highland NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the treatment provided to his late father (Mr A). Mr A had complained about poor memory and poor balance over a number of weeks. The board carried out a number of investigations, however, due to the wait for follow-up appointments, Mr A decided to seek private treatment and he was subsequently diagnosed with Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD - a rare degenerative brain disorder). Mr C complained that the board failed to carry out the appropriate investigations, and that the board inappropriately discharged Mr A when his condition was getting progressively worse.

The board confirmed they were satisfied that the appropriate investigations were undertaken. They acknowledged that they could not offer Mr A an earlier appointment and explained that this was due to the service being understaffed.

We took independent advice from a consultant neurologist (a doctor who specialises in the brain and nervous system). We found that the appropriate investigations were carried out. Due to the nature of Mr A's condition, a number of conditions had to be ruled out first and there is no single test that can be performed in order to reach a diagnosis. The board subsequently informed us that the staffing issues have since been resolved. We also considered that it was appropriate to discharge Mr A as the risks of complications was much lower at home than in hospital. We did not uphold Mr C's complaints, however, feedback was provided regarding the board's communication with the patient and his family and the manner in which Mr A was prioritised.