

SPSO decision report



Case: 201809343, A Medical Practice in the Forth Valley NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained on behalf of her late son (Mr A) about the care and treatment he received from his GP practice. Mr A phoned the practice as he was coughing and felt unwell. Mr A was considered to have symptoms of a cold and he was prescribed a cough suppressant. Around a week later, Mr A died from pneumonia (an infection of the lungs).

Mrs C complained that the practice unreasonably diagnosed Mr A over the phone, even though he had asthma and learning difficulties. We took independent advice from a GP. We found that as Mr A was noted to have symptoms of a cold, it was reasonable that he was diagnosed over the phone, even though he was a vulnerable adult. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Mrs C also complained that when she was admitted to hospital shortly afterwards, the practice did not contact her son to check on his condition. We found that the practice had not been informed of Mrs C's hospital admission or advised of any concerns about Mr A. Therefore, we found that the practice had no cause to check on Mr A's condition. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Lastly, Mrs C complained about the practice's handling of her complaint. We found that there were failings in their complaints handling, which the practice had already acknowledged and apologised for. We noted that Mrs C's complaint was not acknowledged within the relevant timescale and her request for a phone call was not followed up. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaints should be handled in line with the NHS Scotland Model Complaints Handling Procedure. The model complaints handling procedure and guidance can be found here: www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/handling-complaints/complaints-procedures/nhs

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.