

SPSO decision report

Case: 201907867, Fife NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained on behalf of their late child (A) who died of cancer. A received treatment from the dermatology department for a mole on their back. The mole was removed and, following testing, it was found to be cancerous.

A had further treatment from the plastic surgery department to excise (remove by cutting) more tissue from the area, which was tested and confirmed no cancer cells were present. After, A presented with abnormal lymph nodes, tests confirmed that they were cancerous. A underwent a procedure to remove the lymph nodes and some painful lumps on their body. After this procedure, A refused any further treatment.

C complained that the board did not do enough in the early stages to treat A's cancer. C felt that the procedure to remove the initial mole should have been more thorough, that A should have been monitored more closely for any spread of cancer, and that other treatments should have been considered at an earlier date. C said that they were unhappy with the board's communication with A and their family and that they were unhappy with the way in which the board handled their complaint, as they felt it was not consistent with their recollection of events.

We sought independent advice from clinical advisers with relevant experience. Both advisers reached the view that the care and treatment provided to A by the dermatology and plastic surgery departments were reasonable both in the early stages, and when the cancer later returned. It was also their view that the board's communication with A and their family members was reasonable.

In light of the evidence and the advice received, we found that the care and treatment provided to A and the communication from the board to A and their family was reasonable. We also found that the board's response to C's complaint was in line with what was recorded in the medical records. Our investigation did not identify any evidence that would cause us to doubt the board's position as detailed in their response. Therefore, we considered that the board handled and responded to C's complaint reasonably.

For the reasons set out above, we did not uphold C's complaints.