

SPSO decision report



Case: 202003431, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C, an advocate, complained on behalf of their client (B) about the care and treatment provided to B's late spouse (A). A had attended their GP practice complaining of pain between the shoulder blades and breathlessness on exertion and was seen by a nurse practitioner. The nurse referred A to hospital for a chest x-ray which they received the next day. A then received further x-rays throughout the month following attendances at A&E. They were referred to another hospital where they were later diagnosed with advanced lung cancer.

B complained about the about the nurse's assessment and that the practice failed to follow up on the chest x-ray they referred A for, and failed to follow up on their various attendances at A&E. Had they done so, B considered that A might have been diagnosed sooner.

We took independent advice from a nurse and a GP. We found that the assessment by the nurse practitioner was reasonable and the decision to refer A for chest x-ray and spirometry (a simple test used to help diagnose and monitor certain lung conditions) was appropriate.

In relation to the x-ray taken after the nurse's referral, the results recommended referral to respiratory medicine but the practice did not receive the report until after A's death. We found that it was the responsibility of radiology (specialises in diagnosing and treating disease and injury through the use of medical imaging techniques such as x-rays and other scans) to send the x-ray report to the GP, which in this case had not happened and would not expect a practice to chase up records. We also noted that the practice now log all investigation requests and check that results have been returned, which is good practice and above the standard level of care.

In relation to the various attendances at A&E, we found that it is not expected of the practice to follow up on these attendances. There was no mention in the discharge letters sent to the GP of any action required.

Therefore, we did not uphold C's complaints.