

SPSO decision report

Case: 202105110, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C, an advocacy worker, complained on behalf of their client (A) about the care and treatment provided by the board during a four day admission to hospital. A, a type 1 diabetic (a condition where blood glucose levels are too high because the body cannot make the hormone insulin), was admitted for lower abdominal pain. A received an ultrasound scan on the following day which proved inconclusive. The next day A received a CT scan which showed free fluid, in keeping with a burst ovarian cyst. A was discharged the following day.

C complained that A was discharged, having received no treatment, in pain, and without follow-up referrals. C complained that as a type 1 diabetic, A's diabetes and food intake had not been correctly managed. The board said that treatment, discharge, and diabetes management were appropriate. The board apologised for not offering meals after breakfast on the day of discharge.

We took independent advice from a gastrointestinal and general surgeon (specialist in the digestive system). We found that A's nutritional intake had been appropriately restricted due to investigations which were necessary to rule out surgery. A's diabetes had been appropriately managed via an insulin infusion called a sliding scale. We found that no treatment or follow-up care would be indicated for a burst ovarian cyst as this would usually resolve itself. We found that prior to discharge, A's pain had reduced such that they were able to manage it with paracetamol alone and that discharge was therefore appropriate. Therefore, we did not uphold this part of C's complaint.

C also complained about the quality of complaints handling. We found that although there was a delay in providing a complaint response, this was because a meeting was being organised and that C was appropriately informed of the delays. Post decision correspondence was also delayed. However, this did not breach the Model Complaints Handling Procedure, which does not specify timescales for post decision correspondence. As the board had already increased administrative staff, improved procedures and apologised, we did not uphold this part of C's complaint.