

SPSO decision report

Case: 202204863, Highland NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C was sent to hospital by the GP with a diagnosis of severe cellulitis (an infection caused by bacteria getting into the deeper layers of your skin). Prior to being sent to hospital, C received paracetamol, intravenous fluids and intravenous antibiotics. On arrival at hospital, C had a long wait until being treated and C complained that the delay in admission and treatment was unacceptable.

The board apologised that C had to wait in their car and explained that patients were seen on a clinical priority basis. They advised that C's clinical priority was not deemed to be urgent as C had received paracetamol, fluids and antibiotics before arrival.

We took independent advice from an acute and general medicine adviser. We found that at the time, there was no clear system for prioritising patients. However, since then the board have improved their practice. We found that the triage which had been undertaken after admission had not followed guidelines. Additionally, we found that the waiting time to receive antibiotics was longer than the recommended maximum wait between antibiotic doses. As such we upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the delay in admission and treatment, specifically that clinical priority was not appropriately assessed, that the triage decision was not in line with the guidance and that there was a delay in administering medication. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Staff should triage patients in line with the relevant guidance.

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.