

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201205058, An NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Miss C's mother (Mrs A) was admitted to an island hospital with pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas), where her condition deteriorated overnight. The next day, it was identified that she was developing organ failure, as a complication of the pancreatitis. She was transferred to a mainland hospital in another health board area. Mrs A died around sixteen days later from multiple organ failure.

Miss C complained about the care and treatment provided to her mother in the island hospital in the two days before she was transferred. After taking independent advice from one of our medical advisers, we found that a prompt and appropriate detailed medical assessment was completed when Mrs A was admitted. There was clear documentation of her vital signs, current drug treatment, physical examination and initial blood tests. The initial diagnosis of acute pancreatitis was correct and was made within a very short time. We also found that the later care and treatment provided to Mrs A was reasonable and appropriate, as was the attention to her pain relief. The deterioration in Mrs A's condition was due to the development of increasingly severe pancreatitis, complicated by early organ failure, rather than inadequate medical care. We did not consider that there were any clinical failings that impacted adversely on Mrs A, and our adviser said that no other specific treatment could have been offered at that time that might have changed the course of events.

Miss C also complained that the board failed to provide her and her sibling (who were both teenagers) with sufficient support when their mother was transferred to the mainland hospital. Miss C decided not to travel with Mrs A when she was transferred by ambulance, and said that when she and her sibling later went to visit their mother, they had to stay in a bed and breakfast without any support.

We found that although it would not have been appropriate for the board to pay their costs, they should have provided Mrs C's children with advice on how to try to get help with these. We also found that Miss C was not given enough information about her mother's prognosis to make an informed decision about whether to travel with her in the ambulance. Having carefully considered this matter, we upheld the complaint that the board had not provided Mrs A's children with adequate support when it was decided that she should be transferred.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- issue a written apology to Miss C for the failure to provide her with adequate information about her mother's prognosis and for failing to provide her with adequate advice on how to try to obtain further support with travel costs; and
- take steps to ensure that relatives are given adequate information about how to try to get help with the costs of visiting patients who are transferred to hospital on the mainland.