

SPSO decision report

Case: 201302500, A Medical Practice in the Highland NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C had taken his late wife (Mrs C) to her medical practice as she had suffered from vomiting, diarrhoea and dizziness for two days, following a surgical procedure. Mrs C had a history of systemic lupus erythematosus (an inflammatory, multi-system autoimmune disease) and Mr C was concerned that due to his wife's medical history she should have been admitted to hospital. The GP who assessed Mrs C had diagnosed possible infective gastroenteritis, recommended medication and fluids and to seek a further medical review if there was no improvement. Mrs C deteriorated overnight and was admitted to hospital the next day where she continued to deteriorate and died a few days later. Mr C was concerned that his wife might have had a better chance had she been admitted earlier, and complained that the GP had not assessed her properly and had failed to arrange a hospital admission for her.

As part of our investigation, we took independent advice from one of our medical advisers. After studying Mrs C's medical records, our adviser concluded that this was a tragic case of a rapid deterioration in a person with an extremely rare condition, and she did not see any evidence in Mrs C's records to suggest that the GP could have foreseen or prevented this. We did not uphold the complaint, as our adviser said that the GP provided appropriate clinical treatment and had no concerns about their actions.