

SPSO decision report

Case: 201304150, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that her husband (Mr C) received inadequate medical and nursing treatment after being admitted to the Western General Hospital. She was particularly concerned by a decision to place him on the Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP: a form of end of life care) which provides palliative care (care provided solely to prevent or relieve suffering). Mrs C believed that this decision hastened her husband's death, and pointed out that a hospice referral form appeared to give him a prognosis (forecast) of at least six months.

Our investigation found that Mr C had been admitted with a urine infection. He was, however, also suffering from advanced lung cancer, which had spread to his brain. Although his urine infection was successfully treated, Mr C deteriorated rapidly and a scan of his brain revealed that the cancer had spread faster and further than previously thought. We took independent medical advice from two advisers: a consultant oncologist (cancer specialist), and a nursing adviser. Our oncologist adviser said that Mr C's treatment had been reasonable and that the decision to place him on the LCP was appropriate. Our nursing adviser said Mr C had received a reasonable standard of nursing treatment. We found no evidence that Mr C was not treated appropriately.