

SPSO decision report

Case: 201400573, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the care and treatment his late father (Mr A) received during two admissions to St John's Hospital. Mr C felt staff had not considered his father's electronic test results appropriately, particularly in relation to the level of sugar in his blood and whether he had an infection. Mr C also said that the board had failed to provide his father with appropriate medical treatment, and that this had contributed to Mr A's death (which occurred during his second hospital admission).

As part of our investigation we took independent medical advice from one of our advisers, who explained that Mr A had been an elderly man who was most unwell. Although Mr C felt the test results showed his father had an untreated infection and diabetes, our adviser said this was only one possible explanation. Our adviser acknowledged it was possible that Mr A had an infection but he also said there were other possible explanations. In his professional view, Mr A's test results neither pointed to an infection nor meant additional steps should reasonably have been taken. Our adviser did, however, say the board's communication could have been better because Mr C appeared not to have realised just how unwell his father had been.

Mr C had made his concerns clear and we fully acknowledged the importance of this matter for him and his family. However, our role was to consider the reasonableness of the board's care and treatment. We acknowledged that this was already a difficult time for Mr C, and that this would not have been aided by a lack of clear communication by clinical staff. However, taking everything into account, we did not find the evidence indicated the board failed to consider Mr A's test results or provide appropriate medical treatment, so we did not uphold Mr C's complaint.