

SPSO decision report

Case: 201403201, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr A had suffered a morphine overdose and become unwell. An ambulance was called and the crew assessed Mr A. He was nauseous and vomiting, had abdominal (stomach) pains and was unable to keep down food or drink. He was taken to Perth Royal Infirmary, where he was triaged and sent to the out-of-hours service. He was assessed there by a primary care nurse, and deemed fit to be discharged.

His niece (Mrs C) complained on behalf of Mr A. She said that when Mr A had been discharged he had phoned her and was confused and disorientated. Mrs C complained that her uncle was not reasonably assessed at the hospital and should not have been discharged.

During our investigation we took independent advice from both a GP adviser and a nursing adviser. Both advisers expressed concerns that the assessment of Mr A was not thorough. The nursing adviser was concerned that Mr A's recent morphine overdose history was not noted and that his abdomen was not examined, in light of the pain reported to the ambulance crew. The GP adviser was also concerned that Mr A was not assessed for dehydration due to his inability to keep down liquids. In light of the advice we received, we upheld Mrs C's complaints.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- share the outcome of this investigation with the practitioner concerned to reflect on assessment and record-keeping; and
- apologise to Mr A for the failings identified.