

SPSO decision report

Case: 201407811, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that the board failed to provide her with reasonable treatment for her thyroid problem. Ms C listed several issues regarding her care. She said that the consultant ear, nose and throat surgeon at the Southern General Hospital who dealt with her case underestimated the seriousness of the original scan and histology findings (report on the microscopic appearance of tissue). She complained that the surgeon unreasonably subjected her to repeat investigations and new referrals. She also complained that the surgeon ignored the final histology report which Ms C said confirmed she had cancer. Additionally, Ms C complained that the board did not respond reasonably to her complaint about her treatment.

We obtained independent advice on the complaint from a consultant surgeon specialising in ear, nose and throat, head and neck, and the thyroid gland. The adviser said that, given the length of time Ms C had had the nodule on her thyroid, the previous investigation of the nodule, and the fact there was no record of it having changed since it was first noted, the likelihood of malignancy (cancer) would have been low. The adviser explained that it was entirely reasonable for the consultant to undertake investigations before removing the nodule to check that there were no other medical issues which could cause problems with the anaesthetic and surgery.

The adviser did not consider that the consultant ignored the final histology report, just that they had not seen it. Ms C had moved house and was receiving treatment from another board by the time the consultant saw the report. However, the adviser said there was an unnecessary delay in the consultant noting and acting on the final histology report. This appeared to be caused by the process in the department for checking the results, and the board have indicated that action has been taken to improve this.

On balance, we considered that the board did not fail to provide Ms C with reasonable treatment. However, we also considered that the board did not respond reasonably to Ms C's complaint as there were inaccuracies in their response.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- feed back our decision on Ms C's complaint about the treatment provided by the board to the staff involved; and
- provide Ms C with a written apology for the failings identified in both complaints.