

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507498, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality

Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the communication between her grandfather (Mr A), who had prostate cancer, and the medical practice. Mr A was cared for by the practice at home, on a GP-led ward and while he was in a nursing home. Mr A died ten days after his admission to the nursing home. Ms C complained that the practice had failed to communicate appropriately with Mr A in relation to his cancer diagnosis and treatment options, despite the practice having access to this information.

We took independent advice from a GP adviser. They noted that Mr A was being seen by a consultant urologist (a clinician who treats disorders of the urinary tract) and that it was the urologist's responsibility to discuss Mr A's cancer diagnosis and treatment options with him, not the GP's. We therefore did not uphold Ms C's complaint.

The adviser noted that there was a delay in referring Mr A for an ultrasound scan and that the national referral guidelines for suspected cancer had not been followed. We therefore made a recommendation in relation to this.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- ensure the relevant GP familiarises themselves with the national guidelines for cancer referral and considers identifying this as a learning point for their annual appraisal.