

SPSO decision report

Case: 201705319, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained to us on behalf of her late sister (Ms A). Ms A had cancer and was receiving radiotherapy treatment (a treatment using high-energy radiation) in hospital. Mrs C complained that there was an unreasonable delay in providing Ms A with radiotherapy treatment and Mrs C felt that Ms A should have been prioritised due to her pain levels. Mrs C also complained that the board did not investigate her complaint reasonably.

We took independent advice from a consultant oncologist (a doctor who specialises in cancer treatment). We did not find that there was an unreasonable delay in providing Mrs A with treatment. The adviser commented that it is not routine practice to prioritise patients' scans or treatment slots based on symptoms. We also considered that the board took reasonable steps to manage Ms A's pain whilst in the hospital, as she had been provided with pain relief medication during her admission. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Regarding complaints handling, we were unable to definitively assess how accurate or inaccurate the board's response to Mrs C's complaint was as they could not provide us with evidence on Ms A's admission timings. The board, therefore, failed to demonstrate that their response to Mrs C's complaint was evidence-based and we upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for not investigating her complaint reasonably. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.