

SPSO decision report

Case: 201811064, Lanarkshire NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained on behalf of A, who has a history of complex congenital heart disease (a problem with the structure of the heart). A was admitted to Hairmyres Hospital, treated for paroxysmal atrial fibrillation (a heart condition that causes an irregular and often abnormally fast heart rate) and a possible chest infection, and discharged a few days later. A was readmitted to hospital three weeks later and diagnosed with endocarditis (an infection of the heart valves). A said that they had asked a doctor specifically about endocarditis during the first admission, but the doctor told them they had been tested for endocarditis and did not have it. C complained that A should have had blood cultures (a test used to detect bacteria or fungi in a person's blood) taken to test for endocarditis during this first admission.

The board did not uphold C's complaint. They said that doctors considered whether A had endocarditis, but ruled this out because A did not have symptoms of endocarditis at the time. The doctor said they told A that tests showed they did not have a significant underlying infection, but not that they had been tested specifically for endocarditis.

We took independent medical advice from an appropriately qualified adviser. We found that endocarditis was considered, but it was reasonable for doctors to rule this out based on the evidence at the time. We also found that it was reasonable for doctors not to take blood cultures during this admission, based on A's symptoms. The medical records stated A was told that they did not have a 'significant infection' (rather than endocarditis specifically), and we did not consider A was given incorrect information about being tested specifically for endocarditis. We did not uphold this complaint.