

SPSO decision report

Case: 202207008, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment provided to their late spouse (A) for cardiac amyloidosis (the abnormal build-up of a protein (amyloid) in the heart).

C complained about delays in referrals, diagnosis and treatment. The Board did not uphold the complaint and considered that there had been no delay in referring A to an appropriate specialist or in their diagnosis and treatment.

C was unhappy with this response and brought their complaint to this office. C also complained that the board had failed to adequately investigate and/or respond to their complaint.

We took independent advice from a consultant cardiologist (specialist in diseases and abnormalities of the heart) and a consultant haematologist (specialist in blood and bone marrow). We found that A's cardiology care and treatment was reasonable. However, we also found that there was an unnecessary delay in referring A for specialist haematological treatment and that this treatment was poorly documented. Additionally, we found that the communication with A's family about A's treatment could have been better. We upheld this part of C's complaint.

As these failures were not identified by the board, we found that the board had failed to adequately investigate and respond to C's complaint. We upheld this part of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Patients should receive appropriate and timely care and treatment that is in line with relevant guidance. Where a patient has been referred to the National Amyloidosis Centre (NAC) and advice is awaited, appropriate and timely reviews of the patient should be carried out and where clinically necessary, the patient's case should be prioritised.
- Communication with a patient and their extended family about their care and treatment should be proactive, clear, and timely.
- Patient records should be accurately completed with the appropriate level of information included, in accordance with the relevant medical and nursing standards.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaints should be handled in line with the relevant complaint handling guidance when investigating and responding to complaints. We offer SPSO accredited Complaints Handling training. Details and registration forms for our online self-guided Good Complaints Handling course (Stage 1) and our online trainer-led Complaints Investigation Skills course (Stage 2) are available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/training-courses>.

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.