

SPSO decision report

Case: 202210585, Forth Valley NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained that the advice and treatment provided by the board following their positive COVID-19 test was unreasonable. C was a kidney transplant patient who tested positive for COVID-19 in early 2022. C said that they had contacted the renal unit who referred them on to the Covid Pathway (a central unit offering treatment advice and antiviral medication for high-risk patients). C received antiviral medication from a Covid Pathway nurse but was not referred to a renal clinician or advised to stop the immunosuppressant medication they were taking.

C later contacted the renal unit with concerns about diarrhoea. C was advised to stop the immunosuppressant over the weekend and was given advice on what to do if their condition worsened. C felt that they were given wrong advice about their medication and that their disease progression was more severe because of this.

The board advised that they had no record of C's contact with the renal unit about COVID-19. Their first record was 11 days later, when they spoke to a renal nurse with concerns about diarrhoea.

We took independent advice from a pharmacist and a consultant nephrologist (specialist in the diagnosis, treatment, and management of kidney conditions). We found that if C had indeed phoned the renal unit initially, C should have been escalated to a clinician for medication advice. We were also critical that the nurse at the Covid Pathway had not sought advice from or referred C to the renal unit.

However, we noted that the immunosuppression medication was new and the situation was fluid at the time. We noted that improvements were made within two weeks, during which, guidance was published to ensure robust advice and treatment for COVID-19 positive, immunosuppressed patients and contact details for specialist clinical units were provided to the Covid Pathway. We also considered that the COVID-19 pandemic had since largely subsided.

We considered that the advice and treatment that C received was reasonable as we could not definitively say that C had initially contacted the renal unit, the situation was new and fluid, and improvements to the process had been appropriately and quickly made. Therefore, we did not uphold C's complaint.