

### **Doctor's consultation prior to patient's death was 'reasonable and appropriate'**

A patient who died three days after visiting his doctor for a routine medical review received treatment that was 'appropriate and in accordance with relevant guidance' according to an investigation by the Ombudsman.

The complainant alleged that her husband's condition was not properly assessed and treated when he went to see his doctor on 27 June 2018.

The patient complained at the appointment that he had had a sore throat for two or three days, felt warm and had experienced an episode of shaking the previous evening.

The doctor examined his throat and checked his temperature but did not prescribe anything and advised the patient to return if his symptoms did not improve or deteriorated. On 29 June 2018 the complainant contacted the GP Practice seeking a home visit for her husband. However an emergency appointment was arranged for that afternoon.

The patient attended and was seen by a doctor. He arrived at the hospital and was later transferred to the Regional Intensive Care Unit the same day where despite preparation for further transfer to hospital in London for treatment he sadly died on 1 July 2018.

The patient's wife complained to the Practice, and then to the Ombudsman about the care and treatment provided by the doctor. She stressed her family's bewilderment at the speed of the deterioration of her husband's condition and the tragic outcome. She emphasised that she was looking for answers to her questions whether anything should have been done differently or was overlooked at the appointment on 27 June.

She also stated she wanted the reassurance that an independent body had looked into her complaint.

As the hospital had recorded that the patient had suffered "multiple organ failure, septic shock, and streptococcal pneumonia" the investigation also checked to see if signs of sepsis were overlooked.

The investigation looked at the details of the complaint, the Practice's response, and the relevant NICE guidelines. An independent professional advisor was also asked for an opinion on the patient's treatment.

The Practice stated that when the doctor assessed the patient he took his temperature and examined his throat but did not listen to his lungs because of the absence of respiratory symptoms. He recorded that the throat examination was normal and that the temperature was mildly elevated. The Practice also said that the clinical picture was in keeping with a viral, upper respiratory tract infection and antibiotic treatment was not required.

The independent advisor agreed with this course of action and that there was no requirement to arrange further investigation at the consultation or to seek specialist review. The advisor also stated

that there was no indication in the notes that the patient should have been regarded as being at increased risk of developing sepsis.

The doctor's consultation was therefore found to be 'reasonable and in keeping with usual and normal practice.'

The complaint was not upheld.