

Complaint case study for publication on Trust website July 2015:

Mrs E raised concerns on behalf of her mother, Mrs R, that she was incorrectly diagnosed with renal cancer.

Mrs R was seen in clinic in October 2014 and was informed by the doctor that she had renal cancer and surgery was not an option, due to the fact that she only had one kidney. A CT scan was requested which the family assumed was to monitor any spread of the cancer.

Mrs R was unwell shortly after this appointment and the family presumed this was a response to the cancer and the prognosis was bleak. Mrs E reported that staff from the hospice also saw Mrs R regularly as they believed her to be in the end stages of cancer.

The CT scan was performed in January 2015 and Mrs E was contacted by a nurse specialist, who advised that Mrs R did not have cancer and offered them an appointment with a consultant to discuss this further.

Mrs E states that the incorrect diagnosis caused unnecessary upset and trauma to Mrs R and her family. She wanted the doctors involved to be held accountable for this misdiagnosis and changes made to prevent this happening again.

Our findings

This complaint was investigated by the General Manager for Urology. Following investigation, the complaint was not upheld.

Mrs R was referred to the urology team by her GP. She attended the one-stop haematuria clinic in October 2014 and underwent an ultrasound scan. The report from this scan mentioned the presence of a heterogeneous mass and stated that renal cell carcinoma or other malignancy (cancer) could not be excluded. In light of this report, the doctor felt it was his professional responsibility to explain this possible diagnosis and to investigate this further, requested a CT scan.

In summary, whilst we acknowledged that any discussion regarding a possible cancer diagnosis is distressing, it was reasonable and appropriate for this to be discussed with Mrs R, in line with onward plans for investigation. Nonetheless, apologies were offered for the obvious distress that this caused.