

SPSO decision report

Case: 201004490, A Medical Practice in the Highland NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Miss C complained that, when she visited her GP as a new patient, he refused to prescribe her Zopiclone (a drug used to treat sleeping problems). She said she had been unable to sleep because she had been in a hypomanic stage (a period of mild over-active, excited behaviour) of her bipolar disorder (a condition that affects a person's mood) for the last two months. From previous use, she said she knew that Zopiclone would help. She told the GP that her former GP and her psychiatrist found this acceptable.

Our investigation found that the GP had been right to be cautious as Zopiclone is a drug that must be prescribed with care. For example, it is a drug that is open to abuse as a so-called street drug. Also, Miss C's medical records had not yet arrived, so the GP's knowledge of her was very limited. He did prescribe alternative medication, so there is no question that she was given nothing to help with her condition. The GP then contacted her former GP and her psychiatrist and, having been reassured by some of the information from them, prescribed the Zopiclone the next day. Our independent medical adviser considered that this was a very reasonable approach and we did not uphold Miss C's complaint.