

SPSO decision report

Case: 201101164, A Medical Practice, Lothian NHS Board area

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

At a consultation with her GP, Mrs C said she had swollen ankles. Her GP advised her to stop taking her medication for high blood pressure, which she did. Mrs C was admitted to hospital with chest pain two months after the consultation with her GP and died several hours later. Over time, Mrs C's husband (Mr C) became concerned about a possible link between the medication being stopped and his wife's death.

Mr C complained that the GP's advice was not properly considered or reasonable. He also complained that the practice did not take reasonable steps to monitor his wife's health following their advice that she should stop taking the medication prescribed for high blood pressure.

We found, from looking at the evidence and taking advice from one of our medical advisers, that ankle swelling was a common side effect of the blood pressure medication Mrs C had been taking and, given Mrs C's symptoms, the advice to stop taking blood pressure medication was reasonable. We also found that blood tests were organised after the consultation with the GP, but that there was no clear instruction for a follow-up check of blood pressure. However, blood pressure was monitored at other appointments with staff at the practice, and was within normal limits. It was not entirely clear from the records that this was part of a systematic plan of care that followed from the decision to discontinue the medication. Therefore, we asked the practice to reflect on follow-up arrangements made for patients when medications are discontinued, and to record specific plans for follow-up within the records. However, overall, we found that there was evidence that the practice took reasonable steps to monitor Mrs C's health and we did not uphold Mr C's complaints.