

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201104872, A Medical Practice in the Highland NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C attended the medical practice with her son (Master A), who was complaining of a high temperature, sore throat and sore ear. A GP diagnosed a virus, however, his condition worsened over the next few days and they returned to the practice.

During this visit, another GP diagnosed Master A with an ear infection and prescribed antibiotics. The following week, Mrs C and her son returned to the practice and were referred to a hospital for treatment. A doctor at the hospital diagnosed Master A with an abscess and carried out an ear procedure.

The following week, Mrs C returned Master A to the practice as he had pain behind his ear. The GP prescribed more antibiotics, but several days later Mrs C took her son returned as the area behind his ear had worsened. The GP cut the lump to drain it. Mrs C said this was done without any anaesthetic and was painful. Master A's condition failed to improve and when they returned to the practice 11 days later, a GP diagnosed an infection of one of the bones in the ear and advised them to return to the hospital to see another specialist. However, Mrs C took her son to another country for treatment. She said that he was then diagnosed with inflammation of the lymph node and received appropriate care there, and that the condition cleared within two weeks.

Mrs C complained that the practice failed to diagnose the problem accurately. She also said that the ear infection would not have become so severe if the GP at the first consultation had prescribed antibiotics, and that they had failed to take her concerns seriously or to document the consultation.

We did not, however, uphold Mrs C's complaints. After taking independent advice from our medical adviser, we found that the practice's treatment, decisions and management were reasonable, including that the GP did not use a local anaesthetic when cutting the abscess. This is because an anaesthetic can spread the infection to surrounding tissue. We also found no evidence that the GP failed to properly examine Master A or take her concerns seriously at the first consultation, which was clearly documented.