

SPSO decision report

Case: 201202483, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about his care and treatment after a road traffic accident. He complained that the physiotherapy service had not diagnosed his injuries correctly and were overly focused on possible legal action that he was pursuing. Mr C believed that this meant they did not believe his description of his injuries, or the amount of pain he was in. He also felt this influenced the pain clinic he was referred to, where he said staff were also dismissive of symptoms that he maintained were caused by spinal injury. Mr C later paid for a private scan of his spine, which revealed some damage to a spinal disc, which he believed proved the pain he was experiencing had a physical source.

Mr C also said that the board did not investigate his complaint properly. His first letter of complaint was lost, even though it was signed for on delivery. He said that they did not then investigate his complaints about the physiotherapy treatment, concentrating instead on his treatment at the pain clinic.

We took independent advice on Mr C's complaint from two of our medical advisers. The advice we received was that Mr C had received a comprehensive assessment, and that treatment for whiplash associated disorder had initially improved his symptoms. He returned to the physiotherapy service when his symptoms became worse. As he did not then respond to treatment, he was referred appropriately to the pain management clinic. We found no evidence that Mr C's symptoms were treated differently or inappropriately due to a focus on legal action. The private scan showed changes that were normal for a man of Mr C's age and they were not in keeping with the symptoms Mr C described. The treatment Mr C received was appropriate, and in keeping with guidelines and best practice on treating whiplash injuries. Both advisers said that the evidence showed that Mr C's care and treatment was reasonable.

Our investigation found that the board acknowledged that Mr C's initial complaint letter was misplaced, but also that it did not contain enough information to support an investigation. When they became aware that Mr C wanted to complain, they repeatedly tried to establish what he was complaining about, but Mr C did not provide information to the board until we told him he should do so. The information he then provided was limited, and the board were unable to investigate the complaint about the physiotherapy service. They did investigate his complaint about the pain clinic. We did not uphold Mr C's complaints.