

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204022, A Medical Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about a delay by her GPs in diagnosing that she was pregnant. She initially went to the practice to report a missed period, and was advised to take a further pregnancy test, which was negative. She attended the practice five months later saying that she had bloating and constipation. The GP thought she was constipated and prescribed a laxative. Ms C then went on holiday where she participated in various activities. She returned to the practice and it was then diagnosed that she was pregnant. The practice apologised for the missed diagnosis of pregnancy, but said that the GPs had dealt with the symptoms that she reported and had focused on the history of bloating and constipation. They also said that Ms C's complaint would be included in the appraisal folder and discussed at appraisals later in the year, where lessons learned are shared with colleagues.

We obtained independent advice on the complaint from one of our medical advisers, who considered Ms C's medical records in detail. Their advice was that the actions of the GPs were appropriate, although the diagnosis of pregnancy was missed. In such cases, as long as the clinicians involved took reasonable action based on the symptoms that were presented, we have no grounds to criticise their actions. Our adviser had no concerns about the GP's actions and prescription, and noted that the GP had told Ms C to return for re-evaluation if the symptoms did not settle.