

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204299, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the treatment that she received from the board for heel pain (plantar fasciitis), and was unhappy with the advice and information provided in relation to this treatment. As Ms C was dissatisfied with the treatment offered by the board she attended a private podiatrist. After receiving treatment from them, she also complained that the board had not offered her that type of treatment.

While investigating the complaint, we took into account all of the complaints correspondence and Ms C's podiatry record. We took independent advice from one of our advisers, who is a experienced podiatrist. We found that the treatment and actions taken by the board were, in the main, appropriate and evidence based and followed best practice. We also found that there was no justification for the suggestion that the board should have offered Ms C the approach adopted by the private podiatrist, and that advice on heel pain management had been clearly presented. Although we did not uphold the complaint, we did make recommendations, as Ms C had not been examined and our adviser said that it would have been advisable for this to have happened, to rule out the possibility of another condition and to check that insoles purchased were the correct fit. We also took the view that information given to a patient should emphasise that medium to long term management of the condition is usually needed.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- consider introducing a protocol, when attempting to manage plantar fasciitis without an examination of the feet, to ensure that any serious conditions that represent differential diagnoses are not missed;
- ensure that, when recommending that patients purchase insoles/orthoses for use in their shoes, the fit is checked by an appropriately trained professional; and
- consider amending the presentation given on the management of plantar heel pain to emphasise the fact that medium to long term management is usually required, along with anticipated time periods.