

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204958, Lothian NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: policy / administration

Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who is a prisoner, had a stomach ulcer for which he had emergency hospital treatment in January 2012. Helicobacter pylori (a stomach infection) is the most common cause of ulcers and the hospital arranged for him to be tested for infection in March 2012. The results were negative, but Mr C was not made aware of this. He complained that the prison health centre team had not done anything about his ongoing stomach pain and that he had not received his test results or a hospital appointment despite having being referred there in June and October 2012.

We took independent advice on this complaint from one of our medical advisers. We upheld Mr C's complaint, as although we found that the health centre team had prescribed appropriate medication for his symptoms in line with national guidance, we concluded that they had unreasonably delayed in following up his test results with the hospital. We also found that there was a failure in sending a further referral to the hospital requesting that Mr C be re-tested when the hospital apparently told staff that they had no record of a test being done in March 2012. We were unable to clearly establish why Mr C was not told the results of the test carried out in March 2012, nor why it took so long for him to be re-tested.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- ensure the prison has procedures in place to follow-up test results in a timely manner and, where appropriate, arrange prompt re-testing if necessary; and
- apologise to Mr C for failing to follow-up his March test results in a timely manner along with prompt re-testing.